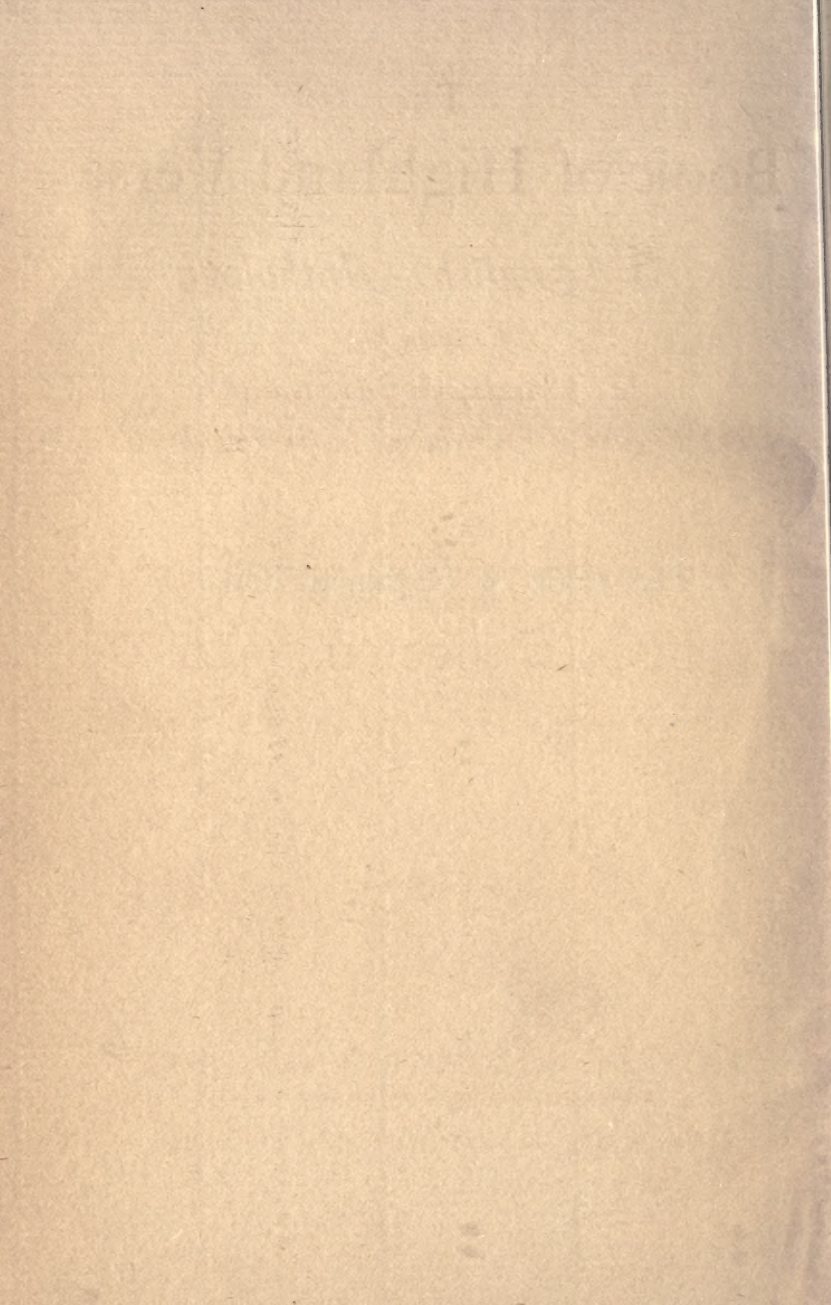




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The
Book of Highland Verse

An (English) Anthology

Consisting of

(a) Translations from Gaelic

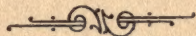
(b) English Verse relating to the Highlands

EDITED, WITH INTRODUCTION, AND BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES
ON THE GAELIC POETS, BY

DUGALD MITCHELL, M.D.

AUTHOR OF

"A POPULAR HISTORY OF THE HIGHLANDS AND GAELIC SCOTLAND"



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INSCRIBED
TO
The Office-Bearers and Members
of
An Comunn Gàidhealach
IN HEARTY APPRECIATION OF
THEIR GENEROUS AND SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS
IN FURTHERANCE OF THE STUDY OF THE
LANGUAGE, LITERATURE, AND MUSIC
OF
THE SCOTTISH GAEL

NOTE.

THE Editor desires to acknowledge with hearty thanks the kindness of those living poets who have so courteously granted permission for the insertion of extracts from their writings. He would also express his gratitude to those friends who have brought to his notice particular poems which otherwise would have been overlooked. To representatives of deceased poets, and to publishers of copyright works from which poems have been extracted, he also desires to acknowledge his deep feeling of obligation for leave so freely given. His indebtedness is due to the following:—Messrs. Blackwood & Sons and the Walter Scott Publishing Co. Ltd., publishers of Professor Blackie's poems; Messrs. Chatto & Windus, publishers of the poems of Dr. George Macdonald and Robert Buchanan; Messrs. Whittaker & Co., publishers of the poems of Dr. Charles MacKay; Messrs. Blackie & Son, publishers of Wilson's *Poets and Poetry of Scotland*; Mr. T. Fisher Unwin, publisher of Dr. Sigerson's *Bards of the Gael and Gall*; Messrs. James Maclehose & Sons, publishers of Dr. Walter C. Smith's poems; Messrs. J. B. Cramer & Co., for certain poems from *The Songs of the North*; Mrs. William Sharp for extracts from "Fiona MacLeod's" poems; David Robertson & Co. Ltd., publishers of *Whistle Binkie*; Messrs. John Ouseley, Ltd., publishers of the poems of Miss Alice C. MacDonell (of Keppoch);

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

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The editor regrets that he has been unable, in a very few instances, to get into communication with recent writers, examples of whose verse he has ventured to insert. Should this volume come to their notice, he hopes he will be held excused by these writers for the liberty he has taken.

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INTRODUCTION.



IN the course of one of his lectures on poetry at Oxford, the late Principal Shairp, who had warm Celtic sympathies, and an intimate acquaintance with the poetry of the Highlands, commended the study of Celtic literature to his audience in the following words : " To Lowlanders, accustomed to read the great standard poets, and to measure all poetry by their model, it may be some advantage to turn aside and look at a poetry wholly unlike that of England, Rome, or Greece ; a poetry which is as spontaneous as the singing of the birds and the beating of men's hearts ; a poetry which is, in great measure, independent of books and manuscripts ; a poetry which, if narrower in compass and less careful in finish, is as intense in feeling, and as true to Nature and to man, as anything which the classical literatures contain."

The somewhat limited outlook of the average Saxon has made appeals of this nature, unfortunately, not uncalled for. " My brother Saxons," writes Matthew Arnold in *The Study of Celtic Literature*, " have, as is well known, a terrible way with them of wanting to improve everything but themselves off the face of the earth ; I have no such passion for finding nothing but myself everywhere ; I like variety to exist and to show itself to me, and I would not for the world have the lineaments of the Celtic genius lost."

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Doubtless what Shairp and Arnold had in view for the students and university dons of their Oxford audiences, in these liberal-minded remarks, was the acquisition of a knowledge of Celtic literature in the original. But the study of Celtic languages has not yet become popular, has not yet made that progress which those broad-minded scholars desiderated, and we may readily conclude that if the general reader—Highland as well as Lowland, in differing degrees—is to make the acquaintance of these literatures it can only be through the medium of translations.

It is this conviction that has prompted the production of the present Anthology, through which it is hoped to deepen an interest in a literature which has many charms, and which has enlisted the sympathies, and won the regard of many of our greatest men of letters. Mayhap it will also aid the Saxon towards a better understanding and a higher appreciation of his Celtic neighbour.

Unfortunately, translations, however ably executed, rarely do justice to the originals. At the best they only enable us to see dimly the beauty or force or spirit of the originals. It is acknowledged that this is particularly true in respect to translations from Gaelic. Those who are familiar with Gaelic know it to be a most expressive language, and therefore difficult of exact interpretation—"a language of grand capabilities." In the case of translations from Gaelic the usual difficulty is exaggerated, the difficulty of finding suitable words to express delicate shades of meaning, and niceties of expression—the giving of the proper "flavour"—with the not infrequent result that verses which are exquisite and tuneful in Gaelic appear

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insipid in their English dress. As Dr. Douglas Hyde has pointed out, this difficulty is accentuated in respect of the older poems "because of the extraordinary condensation of the original—a condensation which was brought about by the necessity of conforming to the most rigid rules of versification."

Notwithstanding the difficulties referred to, the selection garnered in the first part of this volume serves to show that much has been done by competent translators to make the rich stores which adorn the Highland muse available to the English reader. It will be observed, however, that only a meagre beginning had been made with that good work previous to the epoch-making publication of Macpherson's "Ossian." Indeed, up to that time even scholarly Britons were profoundly ignorant of the existence of a Gaelic literature—an ignorance which was, in a measure, excusable from the fact that very little of it, either in an English or a Gaelic dress, had as yet appeared in print. With the publication of "Ossian" a deep interest was immediately aroused, and a lively demand for English renderings of Gaelic verse, ancient and modern, began to arise. Much still remains to be done, however, towards making accessible to non-Gaelic readers more of these simple but genuine treasures.*

* Extracts from Macpherson's "Ossian" have been given a place in the forefront of this Anthology. This position might well have been claimed for "The Lay of Deirdre" and for the extract I have given from "The Death of Fraoch," as they belong to the Cuchulainn or Heroic Cycle, which is believed to have preceded the Ossianic or Fenian Cycle by 200 years.

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No one can read the more recent literature associated with the Ossianic question without recognising that many points involved are as far from receiving a satisfactory answer as they ever were. The foundations are not even settled, and probably never can be. Who were the Feinn and their leader Finn Mac Cumhaill or Fingal? Had the Feinn a historic existence away back in the third century, as the native Irish and Scottish Highlanders believe—were they a martial band—or were they merely of an imaginary or mythical character, tribal deities euhemerised or regarded as men? John F. Campbell looked upon the Fenian heroes as “ancient Celtic Gods,” and Dr. Alexander Macbain spoke of Fionn as “probably the incarnation of the chief deity of the Gaels, and his band of heroes as a kind of terrestrial Olympus.” The weight of scientific opinion would seem to be all in the latter direction, and the tales which form the basis of many of the poems are now looked upon as of eastern origin, Gaelic variants brought hence in the far-off time with the migrations of the Aryans. It is conceivable, however, that Ossian stands for a great poet of his race who actually lived in far-off ages, and who, in process of time, came to be looked upon as a god, because of his high qualities.

In his essay on the “Development of the Ossianic or Fenian Saga,” Mr. Alfred Nutt shows how that, in the course of their evolution, the “mythic features and incidents have been translated, as it were, into historic terms borrowed from the comparatively recent history of the race, and the saga has in consequence been enriched by a new series of personages, and by a wider geographic horizon.” One of these develop-

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ments would undoubtedly be the associating of Fionn and his warriors with the defence of Ireland and the West of Scotland in the struggle with the Danes or Lochlanners, of which we read so much in Macpherson's "Ossian."

However we may look upon these views, and however upsetting they may be to fond traditional beliefs, the interest in the poems of Ossian and the Fenian saga, as literature, is in no way lessened, and would not be lessened though the poems and tales were proved to be as devoid of historic basis as is the siege of Troy. Our belief in Ossian as an actual flesh-and-blood poet of Ireland or of Scotland may have to pass, and we may have to look upon him only in the light of one who was singled out from among the ancient Celtic gods as the representative bard of early times, but the poems have still to be accounted for, and their production speaks to the fact of a Gaelic poet or Gaelic poets who lived, some of them many centuries ago, and who were able to produce a poetic literature which has profoundly influenced the thought and literature of Europe.

Whether the evolution of the Fenian saga owes more to Ireland or to Scotland may well be a matter of dispute. Mr. Nutt, in common with Irish writers generally, claims that the Ossianic "tales were told in Ireland earlier than in Scotland," to which he contends they could not have been brought earlier than the Dalriadic colonisation; and he asserts that "the chief shapers of the cycle have been Irish and not Scotch Gaels." To this claim Scottish Highlanders are not yet prepared to assent. We know little of what occurred in those far-off times, but we do know that

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the relations between Scotland and Ireland were very intimate long before the sixth century colonisation of Dalriada; and the probability is—from its geographical situation—that the Gael and his traditions found a home in Scotland earlier than in Ireland. The poems, in any case, show that in the process of evolution the history of both countries played a part.

When we turn to the question of the “Ossian” of Macpherson and its genuineness we are face to face with a controversy which is not yet settled, and which, more than a hundred years ago, moved the literary world of Britain and Ireland to its depths. As a matter of knowledge, and in relation to the extracts given in this volume, it may be well to look, shortly, into the subject again, and see how it now stands. And the first thing we note is that when Johnson asserted, on the general question, as he dogmatically did, that “Gaelic never was a written language,” and that there was no Gaelic MS. a hundred years old, he was guilty of grievously underestimating the opportunities no less than the achievements of the Celts of Britain and Ireland during the early Christian centuries. In those far-off days learning had been zealously cultivated in the monasteries of the West. Students flocked to them in very large numbers from many quarters, and Columba and several of his successors in the rule of Iona, who had been distinguished for their love of letters, made use of Gaelic as well as of Latin in their prose and poetic compositions. Gaelic literature, indeed, reaches back to the age of St. Patrick—a date, it is interesting to recall, long anterior to Caedmon’s beginnings of English literature. This we

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know mainly from references in the works of later centuries that have come down to us, for, so far as it was written, our earliest Celtic literature has "perished almost to a page" through the ravages of the Danes, and from other causes.

Nor was the production of that literature limited to churchmen, for the bard held from of old an honoured place among the Celts. To be a bard freed a man. Writing about the fiftieth year of our era, Lucan refers in glowing terms to the Celtic bards who by their praises "perpetuate the memory of the fallen brave"; and all down the centuries the bard held a position of privilege in the hall of Highland chief and titled noble. At the coronation of the old Celtic line of Scottish kings, as history records, it was the privilege of a Highland Sennachie, dressed picturesquely in cloak of scarlet, to approach the king, confer his blessing upon him, hail him as "Ri Alban," and recite, in Gaelic, his traditional genealogy.

His was at once a stimulating and an educating influence on the lives of the people. Writing in 1527, Hector Boece tells us that their bards made poems "with mony gret ceremonyis," and under date 1582 George Buchanan says: "Their songs are not inelegant, and in general celebrate the praises of brave men; their bards seldom choosing any other subject."

In dealing with these matters Macaulay well says: ". . . the arts of poetry and rhetoric may be carried near to absolute perfection, and may exercise a mighty influence on the public mind, in an age in which books are wholly or almost wholly unknown. . . . It is probable that in the Highland councils, men who would not have been qualified for the duty

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of parish clerks sometimes argued questions of peace and war, of tribute and homage, with ability worthy of Halifax and Caermarthen, and that, at the Highland banquets, minstrels who did not know their letters sometimes poured forth rhapsodies in which a discerning critic might have found passages such as would have reminded him of the tenderness of Otway or of the vigour of Dryden."

Such considerations as these make us to feel that it is entirely reasonable to believe that poems such as are contained in the "Ossian" of Macpherson, and others of a like nature, might very well have been produced many centuries ago within the Highlands of Scotland. Some of them, undoubtedly, "breathe the spirit of pre-Christian ages." Indeed, as Dr. Magnus Mac Lean contends in *The Literature of the Celts*, "the Celtic genius seems to have found its fullest and most distinctive expression in the days before writing, and before Christianity was introduced, and ever since it has been drawing inspiration from its oldest creations." How many of the poems were ever committed to writing, and, if put in MS. form, at what date this was done, cannot now be even guessed at. The ravages incidental to war, and to the lapse of time, and, possibly, to the active opposition of churchmen like Bishop Carswell of the Isles, make that impossible, though it is probable that some of them were embodied in writing as early as the seventh century. In the "Epistle to the Reader" prefixed to his Gaelic translation of Knox's Liturgy, which he published in 1567 (the first book printed in Gaelic), we find Carswell, in an interesting and extremely significant fashion, lamenting the worldliness of the Gael and their devo-

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tion to other forms of literature. "Some of the literature of the Gael of Alban and Eireand," he says, "is written in MSS. and in the remains of poets and bards, and great is the sin of composers, writers and their supporters of Gaelic, in that they prefer vain, lying stories about the Tuath de Danond, about the sons of Milesius and his heroes, and about Fionn Mac Cuill and his Feine, and of many others whom I shall not describe—the writers of these, with the view to the obtaining to themselves passing worldly gains—rather than to write, compose, and support the faithful word of God and the perfect way of truth." There is a delightful, present-day Highland touch about this. The words are indeed significant, and we can readily imagine the destructive possibilities they suggested to the good Bishop, and probably to many others.

But whether manuscripts perish or remain, popular literature, and poems in particular, live long in the memories of the people, and more especially in the memories of such as cannot read. In this way they pass from individual to individual, and make MSS. the less necessary. In the case of the Highlanders, their social habits and their seclusion among the mountains and on lonely islands would undoubtedly be favourable to the preservation of ancient song, and there is abundant evidence, in this connection, that they effectively cultivated their memories. The extremely interesting collection of Gaelic poems known as the *Book of the Dean of Lismore*, to which reference is made in the text, may be cited in this regard. Dean Mac Gregor's collection was made in the early part of the sixteenth century, and in it are found the earliest MS. Ossianic poems yet discovered in Scotland. The poems are set

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down by him in phonetic spelling, and from this fact we may conclude that they had been garnered by him and his fellow-collector from recitation, and not from MSS., many of them, probably, having passed from individual to individual for hundreds of years, linguistically modified, of course, as the language changed with the passing of the centuries. Jerome Stone, of Dunkeld, who published a rendering of the "Death of Fraoch" in the *Scots Magazine* in 1756, four years before Macpherson's first book ("Fragments") appeared, may be also taken as emphatic on this point. "Those," he says, "who have any tolerable acquaintance with the Irish [Gaelic] language must know that there are a great number of poetical compositions in it, and some of them of very great antiquity, whose merit entitles them to an exemption from the unfortunate neglect, or rather abhorrence to which ignorance has subjected that emphatic language in which they were composed."

That much of this early poetic literature was of the type that we are accustomed to speak of as "Ossianic" does not admit of a doubt. Were these latter poems and tales not of very early date we would not have found "more than a thousand place-names throughout the Highlands relating to Fingal and his heroes," and were they not well known throughout Scotland—probably household words—we would not have the heroes of Ossianic verse referred to in their works by John Barbour in the fourteenth century, William Dunbar in the fifteenth, Gavin Douglas and Sir David Lyndsay in the sixteenth, and Samuel Colville in the seventeenth centuries, respectively. So deep was the impression made by the tale of the exploits of these heroic Celts,

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that they "pervade all Celtic Scotland, and all Gaelic tradition."

It is reasonable to conclude that when Macpherson began his systematic collection of Ossianic verse (his "Fragments" were published in 1760), he found a mass of material available throughout the Highlands, firstly in MS. form, and secondly, and more particularly, surviving in the memories of the people. This is made very evident by the success that attended the numerous gleaners who followed Macpherson, although their opportunities could not have been at all so favourable as those that presented themselves to him. Among these independent collectors (Jerome Stone preceded Macpherson) who were set to work by the interest in the subject which the publication of Macpherson's "Ossian" evoked, were Rev. Alexander Pope, minister of Reay, 1763; Ronald Mac Donald, 1772; Duncan Kennedy, 1774; Thomas Ford Hill, 1780; Dr. John Smith, 1780; John Clark, 1780; Gillies, 1786; Alexander and Donald Stewart, 1804; J. Mac Donald, of Staffa, 1805; Hugh and John MacCallum, 1816; and the Highland Society. To these should be added the names of Turner, Macnicol, Fletcher, Irvine, Sir George Mac Kenzie, Sinclair, MacFarlane, Grant, and lastly John F. Campbell, whose *Leabhar na Feine* (Heroic Gaelic Ballads), were published in 1872. For this work he collected as many as 54,000 lines of heroic poetry, dealing with the stories of Cuchulinn, Deirdre, Fraoch, Fionn, and the Feinn, etc., etc.

But indeed no one now doubts, for there is the clearest evidence furnished by men of probity and discretion, men who helped him in his collecting, who

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saw him at his work, who had a knowledge of Gaelic, and aided in translating the material, that Macpherson in his Highland tours in search of Ossianic verse became possessed of many Gaelic MSS., and that many Gaelic poems were taken down by him and his collaborators from recitation. It is known that he had in his possession the Red Book of Clanranald—an important MS. in this connection.

What remains at issue is the question of the genuineness of the "Ossian" of Macpherson, viewed as a whole; and it is generally felt that there is much in relation to this perennially interesting question that will never be cleared up. "No one can now," says Professor Blackie, "withdraw the veil behind which a dead man of letters chose to hide the secrets of his workshop," but in judging Macpherson we cannot forget that it was his expressed desire to print the originals of "Fingal" by subscription at the time he was giving to the world his English rendering. He, however, got no encouragement to proceed. What he had claimed regarding this poem was that he "was lucky enough to lay his hands on a pretty complete poem, and truly epic, concerning 'Fingal'"; and it is well to remember that if we condemn Macpherson as a wholesale forger, we condemn along with him many honourable men—clergymen, noblemen, scholars, gentlemen of every degree, who saw the MSS., and were capable of judging.

In connection with the question of the genuineness of "Ossian," one of the most interesting pieces of evidence is the fact of the so-called Douay MS., which consisted of a collection of Gaelic poems made about the year 1740 in Strathglas and its neighbourhood by

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the Rev. John Farquharson. The existence of this MS. was attested by Bishop Chisholm, Mr. James Mac Gillivray, Edinburgh; Mr. Ranald Mac Donald, Uist; and Mr. John Farquharson, Elgin. The collection, which was carried to the Scots College at Douay by Farquharson about the year 1753, consisted mainly of "Ossian's poems." On the appearance of Macpherson's translations, Farquharson, we are told, took great pleasure in comparing the renderings with his originals, and his friend, Mr. Mac Gillivray, saw him "in this manner go through the whole poems of 'Fingal' and 'Temora.'" Subsequently, the greater part of this interesting collection was destroyed at Douay (some of the leaves having been used for kindling fires, as the Principal certified), and the remainder was lost.

It is unlikely that we shall ever be able to speak other than in indefinite fashion as to what in these poems was really ancient, and what Macpherson's production, but we cannot but allow that Macpherson's share in them was by no means so great as was asserted at the time by his more harsh critics. That he had a substantial foundation of early poetry to build upon cannot be doubted, and it is not to be forgotten that he did—though it was only after repeated challenge—deposit the originals at his publishers for a whole year, and announced the fact by public advertisement. These MSS. have long since disappeared, unless, indeed, as is supposed, some of them are among those MSS. which were furnished to the Highland Society by Macpherson's literary executor, and are now housed in the Advocates' Library. The Gaelic "Ossian," published in 1807, "was only the clean

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copy prepared for the press by the author's own hands, or those of his amanuensis."

Professor Blackie, who held that Macpherson's English bears all the marks of a translation from a Gaelic original, comes to this further conclusion: "For myself, I have not the shadow of a doubt that Macpherson acted with the most perfect good faith in the matter according to his lights. He found the long-neglected Celtic Muse of the Highlands in a very forlorn, defaced, ragged, and unsavoury condition; and he thought it only his duty, before presenting her to a critical modern public, to wash her well, and scrub her stoutly, and dress her trimly in fresh habiliments of which himself was proud to be the milliner."

In a general way this may be concurred in, but many would have been better pleased had Macpherson given the poems to the public without adornment or addition; and it is not to be forgotten, in relation to this "dressing," that, good as the English rendering undoubtedly is, many learned Highlanders, who were familiar with portions of the poems, considered the translations much inferior to the original.

It remains to be said that should we grant that Macpherson did come into possession of a lengthy poem, such as he asserts formed the basis of his "Fingal," it by no means follows that the poem came from the ancient poet in the form that Macpherson received it. Its then shape may have been the handiwork of some individual of literary tastes who lived at a much later date—one whose soul was saturated with Ossianic lore, and whose eyes were filled with the beauty and glamour of the west. Nevertheless, the fact that these poems differ so widely in character from the

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works of the best post-Reformation Scoto-Gaelic poets shows that they must at any rate be ancient in substance.

Whatever we may now think of "Ossian" as poetry, there can be no doubt of the intense interest aroused throughout the literary world by the publication of "Fingal" in 1762, and "Temora" in 1763; and their influence on literature was very great. In his Introduction to *Lyra Celtica*, William Sharp maintained that "no single work in our literature has had so wide-reaching, so potent, and so enduring an influence" as the "Ossian" of Macpherson. With the publication of the poems, all Europe felt that a new world of magic and mystery had entered into literature, and ere many years had passed they were translated into most of the languages of Europe. They had appeared at a time when the world longed for freedom from shackles of various kinds, and people rejoiced, as Professor Veitch writes in *The Feeling for Nature in Scottish Poetry*, "in the new vision of mountain glory and mountain freedom which was opened up in these strange, weird, Celtic poems." Men felt with Schiller that a "truer inspiration lay in the misty mountains and wild cataracts of Scotland than in the fairest of meadows and gardens."

Had Macpherson done nothing more than this—given to a world which up till then had a difficulty in appreciating any of the glories of earth except those of the "meadow and the garden"—a wider and nobler and more sublime outlook on nature, we would owe him a debt which we would find it difficult to repay. These "mountain monotones," as Principal Shairp calls

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them, prepared Europe "for that passion for mountains which has since possessed it."

Readers of English and Scottish literature know that delight in free nature *for itself*, delight in the most imposing and sublime of God's works, belongs to comparatively recent times. Nothing, on the other hand, was more characteristic of the Gael than his *feeling for nature*, a *feeling* that amounted to friendship; and it is characteristic of him throughout all periods of his history. We find it in Ossian, as we have seen; we find it in the Gaelic verse of Columba, who had an intense love for his native land, and for everything beautiful in nature, animate and inanimate; and we find it all down the course of the centuries. The Gael was ever a keen observer of natural phenomena, and delighted in the use of natural imagery. As we read Celtic verse we feel, over and around us, the "fascination of atmosphere"; we are snatched away from the present to a world of witchery and brooding mysticism, and magic; while, ever and anon, the notes of pathos, and longing, and regret, so characteristic of much of Celtic poetry, keep ringing in our ears, and find an echo in our hearts.

Eminently characteristic of the Gael was his passion for mountains and the great things in nature. The rugged grandeur of the mist-tipped hills, the darkling glen, the rolling river, the foaming cataract, the roar of the ocean, the wild music of the storm, the moaning of the winds among the dark pines of the mountain-side, the sun, the moon, the stars—all the sublime sights and sounds in nature—filled him with wonder and with awe. If we would enter fully into the spirit of the Gael's verse we must seek his environment.

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"To appreciate Ossian's poetry," wrote Gilfillan in his *Bards of the Bible*, "the best way is to live for years under the shadow of the Grampians, to wander through lonely moors, amidst drenching mist and rain, to hold *trystes* with thunderstorms on the summit of savage hills, to bathe in sullen tarns after nightfall, to lean over the ledge and dip one's naked feet in the spray of cataracts, to plough a solitary path into the heart of forests, and to sleep and dream for hours amidst the sunless glades, on twilight hills to meet the apparition of the winter moon rising over snowy wastes, to descend by her ghastly light precipices where the eagles are sleeping, and returning home to be haunted by night visions of mightier mountains, wider desolations, and giddier heights."

To be able to look upon nature, and to enter into sympathetic communion with it as the Celt was able to do from of old, bespeaks a spiritual culture of no mean order, and a civilisation that is far removed from the barbarism with which he is so often credited.

In his *Study of Celtic Literature*, Matthew Arnold helps us to see as no other writer has done, some other characteristics of the poetry of the Celt. While fully alive to the faults of Celtic poetry, faults which he surmises proceed from the Celt's want of patient strenuousness, Arnold is equally warm in his appreciation of those points in which he so notably excels. He grants that the ideal genius would be largely Celtic. He speaks of the Celt's admirable gifts of quick perception and warm emotions, his ardour, his passionate love of poetry, his splendid genius, and his production of short pieces, and snatches of longer poems of singular beauty and power. *Style* he refers to as "the most

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striking quality of their poetry," while rhyme and the gift of rendering with wonderful felicity the magical charm of nature came, he believes, into poetry and romance from the Celts.

All which goes to show that the Celt has in reality filled a worthy place in the evolution of literature.

In the sixteenth century *Book of the Dean of Lismore* to which reference has already been made, we find on the one hand (so far as Scotland is concerned), the earliest written specimens of that verse which we are accustomed to characterise as Ossianic, and on the other hand the link which binds that early form of verse with the more modern poetry of the Highlands. It is interesting to think of this manuscript volume of 311 quarto pages as the earliest collection of poetry made in Scotland. It is now lodged in the Advocates' Library, and is one of the collection of MSS. upwards of sixty in number, many of them torn, dirty, hard to decipher, and harder to understand, which was deposited there in 1861, mainly on the initiative of the late Dr. W. F. Skene. The book is of great interest on account of its age (1512-1526), its orthography (the spelling is phonetic), and its contents. It affords us the best indication we have of the state of bardic minstrelsy in the Middle Ages, and in this regard its value is unique. We see in it, says Dr. Skene, "the remains of an otherwise lost literature, . . . all that we can now recover of native composition current in the Highlands prior to the sixteenth century." Here we find poems ascribed to Ossian, Fergus filidh, his brother, Conall Mac Edirsceoil, Caoilte Mac Ronan, "and many poets of a later age who

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imitated these early bards." Muireadhach Albannach, who seems to have flourished in the thirteenth century, and is claimed as the first of the Mac Vurich bards, is here represented, and among the more modern poets who find a place are Allan Mac Rorie, Duncan Mor from Lennox, John of Knoydart, Finlay Mac Nab, Sir Duncan Campbell of Glenorchy, the Earl of Argyll, and the Countess Isabella. Several translations from this notable collection will be found in this volume. The love song by the countess is the first love song of the more modern kind which we find in Gaelic literature.

Another collection of Gaelic poems which helps to link up the old with the new is known as the Fernaig MS. Professor Mac Kinnon is satisfied that this collection, which was made in far Kintail between the years 1688 and 1693, is the work of Duncan Mac Rae, of Inverinate—Donnachadh nam Pìods, or Duncan of the silver plate, so called from the magnificence of his table service. "The MS. consists," says Mac Lean in his *Literature of the Celts*, "of two paper volumes, in brown paste-board cover, containing 4,200 lines of poetry," by various West-Highland poets. No translation of the poems has yet been published, but several of them have been recently transliterated by Dr. George Henderson.

The Red and the Black Books of Clan Ranald are also of interest in this connection. They are the work of the Mac Vurichs, the hereditary bards of Clanranald, and their contents are largely genealogical and historical. The Red contains Ossianic fragments. It was one of the MSS. secured by Macpherson on his tour in the West, and it has been much consulted in recent

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years by historians and those interested in early poetry.

All these collections go to show, among other things, that a very considerable amount of Gaelic verse must have been composed in the Western Highlands in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries.

Towards the preservation of the best Gaelic verse of the last 300 years, John Mac Kenzie, a native of Gairloch, Ross-shire, did splendid service when, in 1841, he published *Beauties of Gaelic Poetry*. In the collection are to be found gems of every type of poetry, together with biographical notes of the poets, where that was possible. It was in this volume that Blackie, Shairp, Nicolson, Robert Buchanan and others found those poems which they have so effectively rendered into English. It may be noted that it contains none of the old Ossianic heroic ballads.

For the writers of last century, and more particularly the song writers, Archibald Sinclair did a similarly good work when he published, in 1879, his *An T'Oranaiche*, or the *Gaelic Songster*. But for him many songs that are highly prized—humorous, satiric, patriotic, sentimental—would have gone into oblivion. The songs number 290, the product of over fifty composers. Few of them are to be found in this Anthology, in which, indeed, Songs are given a very minor place, for the sufficient reason that the best of them are readily available in many existing Collections. As a collector, the Rev. A. Maclean Sinclair has rendered valuable service during recent years, as also have Rev. A. Macdonald (Killearnan), and the Rev. A. Macdonald (Kiltarlity), by their publication of “The Macdonald Collection of Gaelic Poetry.”

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Among the gleanings of the past which have been published within the last half-century, none is more interesting than the remarkable collection of hymns and incantations which the late Mr. Alexander Carmichael, LL.D., gave to the world under the title, *Carmina Gadelica*. These he published in two sumptuous volumes in the year 1900. They are a selection from the garnerings of forty-four years, taken down from the lips of men and women chiefly in the Western Isles—"the product," says Carmichael, "of far-away thinking, come down on the long stream of time, not through the lettered few, but through the unlettered many, through the crofters and cottars, the herdsmen and shepherds of the Highlands and Islands." Mr. Carmichael has increased our indebtedness to him by providing an English rendering in every instance. Several examples of these quaint hymns and incantations will be found in these pages.

Apart from productions of an Ossianic character, it is agreed that in the fifty years succeeding the "'Forty-five" is to be found the Golden Age of Highland poetry. The period extending between the compilation of the *Book of the Dean of Lismore* and the date referred to was, however, by no means barren nor unimportant. It is marked by the production of a somewhat striking poem called the "Owl," attributed to Donald Mac-Donald, a native of Lochaber; by three Mac Gregor songs—lyrics of the "landless" clan—full of pathos; by the notable poems of Mary MacLeod, the Skye poetess, and John Mac Donald, the Keppoch bard, the first of Jacobite poets; as well as by the verse of lesser bards, such as Archibald Mac Donald, certain of the

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poets of the Fernaig MS., Dorothy Brown of Luining, Cicely Mac Donald of Keppoch, Nial Mac Vurich, the Aosdan Matheson, Hector Mac Lean, Lachlan Mac Kinnon, Roderick Morrison, the blind harper; John Mac Kay, the blind piper; John Whyte, William Mac Kenzie, John Mac Lean, Malcolm Mac Lean, Mac Donald of Muck, Angus Mac Donald, Hector Mac Leod, Archibald Mac Donald, and Zachary Macaulay, the latter the ancestor of Lord Macaulay.

The splendid renaissance referred to, following on the "Forty-five," was heralded by the productions of two poets who continue to hold high place—John Mac Codrum of North Uist, and Alexander Mac Donald of Ardnamurchan. Contemporary with them, or succeeding them within the next fifty years, there appeared a galaxy of singers such as Scotland is never likely to see again. It was the era of Dugald Buchanan, David Mac Kellar, Rob Donn or Mac Kay, Duncan MacIntyre, familiarly known as Donnachadh Bàn, John Roy Stuart, Christiana Ferguson, Lachlan Macpherson, William Ross, Allan Mac Dougall, James Mac Gregor, James Macpherson, Dr. John Smith, Ewan Mac Lachlan, Mrs. Grant of Laggan, and James Shaw—a goodly company indeed, of whom Highlanders may well be proud.

If further we call to mind that this was the period associated with the Ossianic revival initiated by Jerome Stone and James Macpherson we see how outstanding were these fifty years in their relation to Gaelic poetic literature.

While it will always remain impossible to fully account for the marked productiveness of this era, there

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can be little doubt that the Jacobite rising, which so profoundly affected the lives and fortunes of the people of the north and west, had much to do with the setting free of the spirit of poetry in the bards of that period. The romance and the sufferings associated with these events stirred profoundly the emotions of the sweet singers of Highland glen and sea-girt island, as they did many a tuneful Scottish poet of a later date. To this the wealth of our Jacobite lyrics abundantly testify.

Among the poets of the nineteenth century who have found a niche in the Gaelic temple of fame are Alexander Mac Kinnon, Donald Mac Donald, Donald Mac Leod, John Mac Lean, James Munro, Robert Mac Dougall, Dr. John Mac Lachlan, Donald Mac Rae, Peter Grant, Dr. John Mac Donald, John Morrison, Rev. Duncan Mac Lean, William Livingstone, Evan M'Coll, Allan Mac Dougall, Donald Mac Leod, Archibald Campbell, Angus Mac Donald, Dugald Mac Phail, Mary Mac Kellar, John Mac Donald, John Campbell, Neil Mac Leod, and Donald Mac Donald.

When we would appraise the literary value of Gaelic verse, it is well to remember the remarkable fact that the poets of the Highlands were, for the most part, simple peasants. Some of them, indeed, were wholly illiterate. Such genuine singers as Duncan Mac Intyre, Mary Mac Leod, Rob Donn and others who could neither read nor write make it very evident, however, that the reading of books is not the only high-road to the development of natural gifts. These poets have shown beyond question that in the cultivation of the faculty of observation, and in the contact of mind with

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

mind are found two of the best possible educators. It was his keen perception, his loving appreciation of nature, and his power of entering into fellowship with it in all its moods that gave to the landscape word-painting of the Celtic bard much of its faithfulness and charm ; while the freedom of familiar intercourse with men in higher station which he was so often privileged to enjoy, gave character, and tone, and a remarkable measure of culture to his compositions.

The verse of such men as I have referred to make it also evident that it needs not book-learning nor any particular musical training to make men keenly alive to the beauties of sound as expressed in language. The Celt is essentially a "lyrical animal." To the music of words he was always extremely sensitive, and invariably composed his verse to a musical measure, thus adding greatly to its attractiveness. Dr. Douglas Hyde holds that the Gaelic poetry of the last two centuries is probably the most sensuous attempt to convey music in words ever made by man, but he notes that it is absolutely impossible to convey in another language its lusciousness of sound, richness of rhythm, and perfection of harmony.

Within recent years the production of Gaelic verse has been an ever diminishing quantity. Many circumstances conspire to bring about this result, but it is probable that in the fact of the greater influence of the English language, and an increasing acquaintance with it on the part of Gaelic writers, is to be found the chief cause. Men equally familiar with two languages naturally choose for the expression of their ideas that language in which they can appeal with advantage to

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the largest audiences ; and so we find Gaelic-speaking men in ever increasing numbers making choice of English as the medium of expression of Gaelic ideas and Gaelic literary characteristics.

In certain respects this cannot be otherwise than regrettable as lessening the volume and importance of Gaelic literature, and as leading to the disuse of a language which is so eminently fitted for the purposes of the poet. It is consoling, however, to feel that the influence of the Celt, which has always been considered great in English literature, is increased rather than lessened by the change ; for that literature is being permeated by Celtic ideas and enriched by Celtic forms of expression in a greater degree than at any former period of our history. Readers of Scott and Hogg and Leyden and Charles Mac Kay and Robert Buchanan and George Mac Donald and Walter C. Smith and Alexander Smith and John Stuart Blackie and others know how subtle is the charm which is given to much of their verse through the influence of Celtic ideas and methods of expression. All of these writers had felt the spell of Gaelic literature and Gaelic forms of thought upon them, and they had found inspiration for their verse in the history, traditions, customs, fancies, and beliefs of the Scottish Gael. In many of our present day writers, English as well as Scottish, the same influences are at work, with equally happy results.

In the second part of this Anthology—that devoted to English verse relating to the Highlands—will be found many poems breathing the spirit of Celticism, and speaking of a life and genius differing in many

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respects from that which we usually associate with Scottish and English verse. Many of our best poets find here a place, though the limit set upon the volume has not permitted of their being so adequately represented as might well have been desired. Highlanders can never forget the debt they owe to Scott on the one hand, and Blackie on the other, and additional examples of their verse, as well as of that of Hogg and Wordsworth and Campbell and Aytoun and Mac Kay, and Robert Buchanan would have greatly enriched the volume, were further space available. The work of these masters is, however, readily obtainable, and room had to be found for writers less well known to fame, whose verse richly entitled them to a place in an Anthology such as this.

Many of these poems are very captivating, and not a few of them will continue to live in the minstrelsy of our country. Their lilt charms the ear—they sing themselves—and the pathos and longing and intense love of country, which find such full expression, stir our hearts to the depths. Others, finding their inspiration in the old-world traditions and beliefs of the Gael, snatch us away from the prose of everyday life, and enshrine us in an atmosphere of poesy and fancy in which we find it good to linger.

“To-day a wind from the West out over the hills came
blowing—

Ah, how it made dim dreams and memories start !
And I thought that I smelt in my room the wild thyme
growing,
And the scent of the sweet bog-myrtle filled my heart.

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“ Go back, O breath of the hills ! Would that we went
together !

Tell how their lost child fares.

Whisper among the bracken, and say to the broom and
the heather

That still my heart is theirs.”

DUGALD MITCHELL.

FALKIRK, *June, 1912.*

PART I.

Translations from Gaelic.

(a) OSSIANIC VERSE.

OSSIAN'S ADDRESS TO THE SUN.

Macpherson's "Carthon."

O THOU that rollest above,
Round as the shield of my fathers !
Whence are thy beams, O sun !
Thy everlasting light ?
Thou comest forth in thy awful beauty ;
The stars hide themselves in the sky ;
The moon, cold and pale, sinks in the western wave.
But thou thyself movest alone :
Who can be a companion of thy course !
The oaks of the mountains fall :
The mountains themselves decay with years ;
The ocean shrinks and grows again :
The moon herself is lost in heaven ;
But thou art forever the same ;
Rejoicing in the brightness of thy course.
When the world is dark with tempests ;
When thunder rolls, and lightning flies ;
Thou lookest in thy beauty, from the clouds,
And laughest at the storm.
But to Ossian, thou lookest in vain ;
For he beholds thy beams no more ;
Whether thy yellow hair flows on the eastern clouds,
Or thou tremblest at the gates of the west.
But thou art perhaps, like me, for a season,
Thy years will have an end.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Thou shalt sleep in thy clouds,
Careless of the voice of the morning.
Exult thee, O sun ! in the strength of thy youth !
Age is dark and unlovely ;
It is like the glimmering light of the moon
When it shines through broken clouds,
And the mist is on the hills ;
The blast of the north is on the plain ;
The traveller shrinks in the midst of his journey.

THE SONG OF FINGAL.

Macpherson's " Carthon."

RAISE, ye bards, . . . the praise of unhappy Moina.
Call her ghost, with your songs, to our hills ;
That she may rest with the fair of Morven,
The sunbeams of other days,
The delight of heroes of old.
I have seen the walls of Balclutha,
But they were desolate.
The fire had resounded in the halls :
And the voice of the people is heard no more.
The stream of Clutha was removed from its place,
By the fall of the walls.
The thistle shook, there, its lonely head :
The moss whistled to the wind.
The fox looked out from the windows,
The rank grass of the wall waved round its head.
Desolate is the dwelling of Moina,
Silence is in the house of her fathers.
Raise the song of mourning, O bards !
Over the land of strangers.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

They have but fallen before us :
For, one day, we must fall.
Why dost thou build the hall,
Son of the winged days ?
Thou lookest from thy towers to-day ;
Yet a few years, and the blast of the desert comes ;
It howls in thy empty court,
And whistles round thy half-worn shield.
And let the blast of the desert come !
We shall be renowned in our day !
The mark of my arm shall be in battle ;
My name in the song of bards.
Raise the song ; send round the shell :
Let joy be heard in my hall.
When thou, sun of heaven, shalt fail !
If thou shalt fail, thou mighty light !
If thy brightness is for a season, like Fingal ;
Our fame shall survive thy beams.

OSSIAN'S ADDRESS TO MALVINA.

Macpherson's " Oina-Morùl."

As flies the unconstant sun,
Over Larmon's grassy hill ;
So pass the tales of old,
Along my soul, by night !
When bards are removed to their place,
When harps are hung in Selma's hall ;
Then comes a voice to Ossian,
And awakes his soul !
It is the voice of years that are gone !
They roll before me, with all their deeds !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

I seize the tales, as they pass,
And pour them forth in song.
Nor a troubled stream is the song of the King :
It is like the rising of music
From Lutha of the strings.
Lutha of many strings, not silent are thy streamy rocks,
When the white hands of Malvina
Move upon the harp !
Light of the shadowy thoughts,
That fly across my soul,
Daughter of Toscar of helmets,
Wilt thou not hear the song ?
We call back, maid of Lutha,
The years that have rolled away !

OITHONA'S LOVE FOR GAUL.

Macpherson's "Oithona."

SHALL the daughter of Nuath live ? . . .
Shall I live in Tromathon,
And the son of Morni low ?
My heart is not of that rock ;
Nor my soul careless as that sea ;
Which lifts its blue waves to every wind,
And rolls beneath the storm !
The blast which shall lay thee low,
Shall spread the branches of Oithona on earth.
We shall wither together,
Son of car-borne Morni !
The narrow house is pleasant to me,
And the grey stone of the dead :
For never more will I leave thy rocks,
O sea-surrounded Tromathon.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

COLMA'S LOVE FOR SALGAR.

Macpherson's "Songs of Selma."

It is night ;
I am alone, forlorn on the hill of storms.

.
Why delays my Salgar,
Why the chief of the hill, his promise ?
Here is the rock, and here the tree !
Here is the roaring stream !
Thou didst promise with night to be here.
Ah ! whither is my Salgar gone ?
With thee I would fly from my father ;
With thee from my brother of pride.
Our race have long been foes ;
We are not foes, O Salgar !

Cease a little while, O wind !
Stream, be thou silent a while !
Let my voice be heard around.
Let my wanderer hear me !
Salgar ! it is Colma who calls.
Here is the tree and the rock,
Salgar, my love ! I am here.
Why delayest thou thy coming ?
Lo ! the calm moon comes forth.
The flood is bright in the vale.
The rocks are grey on the steep.
I see him not on the brow.
His dogs come not before him,
With tidings of his near approach.
Here I must sit alone !

Who lie on the heath beside me ?
Are they my love and my brother ?

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Speak to me, O my friends !
To Colma they give no reply.
Speak to me : I am alone !
My soul is tormented with fears !
Ah ! they are dead !
Their swords are red from the fight.
O my brother ! my brother !
Why hast thou slain my Salgar ?
Why, O Salgar ! hast thou slain my brother ?
Dear were ye both to me !
What shall I say in your praise ?
Thou wert fair on the hill among thousands !
He was terrible in fight.
Speak to me ; hear my voice ;
Hear me, sons of my love !
They are silent ; silent for ever !
Cold, cold are their breasts of clay !
Oh ! from the rock on the hill ;
From the top of the windy steep,
Speak, ye ghosts of the dead !
Speak, I will not be afraid !

LAMENT FOR MORAR.

Macpherson's "Songs of Selma."

Who on his staff is this ?
Who is this, whose head is white with age ?
Whose eyes are red with tears ?
Who quakes at every step ?
It is thy father, O Morar !
The father of no son but thee.
He heard of thy fame in war ;
He heard of foes dispersed.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

He heard of Morar's renown ;
Why did he not hear of his wound ?
Weep, thou father of Morar ! weep ;
But thy son heareth thee not.
Deep is the sleep of the dead ;
Low their pillow of dust.
No more shall he hear thy voice ;
No more awake at thy call.
When shall it be morn in the grave,
To bid the slumberer awake ?
Farewell, thou bravest of men !
Thou conqueror in the field !
But the field shall see thee no more ;
Nor the dark wood be lightened
With the splendour of thy steel.
Thou hast left no son,
The song shall preserve thy name.
Future times shall hear of thee ;
They shall hear of the fallen Morar !

THE BATTLE ON LENA'S HEATH.

Macpherson's "Fingal."

" I WAIT for the mighty stranger.
I wait on Lena's shore for Swaran.
Let him come with all his race ;
Strong in battle are the friends of the dead !"

.

The sons of ocean heard the horn of Fingal.
As the roaring eddy of ocean
Returning from the kingdom of snows ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

So strong, so dark, so sudden
Came down the sons of Lochlin.
The king in their front appears,
In the dismal pride of his arms !
Wrath burns on his dark-brown face :
His eyes roll in the fire of his valour.
Fingal beheld the son of Starno :
He remembered Agandecca.
For Swaran with the tears of youth
Had mourned his white-bosomed sister.
He sent Ullin of songs
To bid him to the feast of shells :
For pleasant on Fingal's soul
Returned the memory of the first of his loves !
 Ullin came with aged steps,
And spoke to Starno's son.
" O thou that dwellest afar,
Surrounded like a rock, with thy waves !
Come to the feast of the king,
And pass the day in rest.
To-morrow let us fight, O Swaran,
And break the echoing shields."
" To-day," said Starno's wrathful son,
" We break the echoing shields :
To-morrow my feast shall be spread ;
But Fingal shall lie on earth."
" To-morrow let his feast be spread,"
Said Fingal with a smile.
" To-day, O my sons !
We shall break the echoing shields.
Ossian, stand thou near my arm.
Gaul, lift thy terrible sword.
Fergus, bend thy crooked yew.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Throw, Fillan, thy lance through heaven.
Lift your shields, like the darkened moon.
Be your spears the meteors of death.
Follow me in the path of my fame.
Equal my deeds in battle."

As a hundred winds on Morven ;
As the streams of a hundred hills ;
As clouds fly successive over heaven ;
As the dark ocean assails the shore of the desert :
So roaring, so vast, so terrible, the armies mixed
On Lena's echoing heath.
The groan of the people spread over the hills :
It was like the thunder of night,
When the cloud bursts on Cona ;
And a thousand ghosts shriek at once
On the hollow wind.

Fingal rushed on in his strength,
Terrible as the spirit of Trenmor ;
When, in a whirlwind, he comes to Morven,
To see the children of his pride.
The oaks resound on their mountains,
And the rocks fall down before him.
Dimly seen, as lightens the night,
He strides largely from hill to hill.
Bloody was the hand of my father,
When he whirled the gleam of his sword.
He remembers the battles of his youth.
The field is wasted in his course !

Ryno went on like a pillar of fire.
Dark is the brow of Gaul.
Fergus rushed forward with feet of wind.
Fillan like the mist of the hill.
Ossian, like a rock, came down.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

I exulted in the strength of the king.
Many were the deaths of my arm !
Dismal the gleam of my sword !
My locks were not then so grey ;
Nor trembled my hands with age.
My eyes were not closed in darkness ;
My feet failed not in the race !

Who can relate the deaths of the people ?
Who the deeds of mighty heroes ?
When Fingal, burning in his wrath,
Consumed the sons of Lochlin ?
Groans swelled on groans from hill to hill,
Till night had covered all.

THE CHARIOT OF CUCHULLIN.

Macpherson's "Fingal."

ARISE, son of ocean, arise,
Chief of the dark-brown shields !
I see the dark, the mountain-stream of battle !
The deep-moving strength of the sons of Erin !
The car, the car of war comes on,
Like the flame of death !
The rapid car of Cuchullin,
The noble son of Semo !
It bends behind like a wave near a rock ;
Like the sun-streaked mist of the heath.
Its sides are embossed with stones,
And sparkle like the sea
Round the boat of night.
Of polished yew is its beam ;
Its seat of the smoothest bone.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

The sides are replenished with spears ;
The bottom is the foot-stool of heroes !
Before the right side of the car
Is seen the snorting horse !
The high-maned, broad-breasted, proud,
Wide-leaping, strong steed of the hill.
Loud and resounding is his hoof ;
The spreading of his mane above
Is like a stream of smoke on a ridge of rocks.
Bright are the sides of the steed !
His name is Sulin-Sifadda !

Before the left side of the car is seen
The snorting horse ! The thin-maned,
High-headed, strong-hoofed, fleet,
Bounding son of the hill :
His name is Dusronnal,
Among the stormy sons of the sword !

A thousand thongs bind the car on high.
Hard polished bits shine in a wreath of foam.
Thin thongs, bright-studded with gems,
Bend on the stately necks of the steeds.
The steeds that like wreaths of mists
Fly over the streamy vales !
The wildness of deer is in their course,
The strength of eagles descending on their prey.
Their noise is like the blast of winter,
On the sides of the snow-headed Gormal.

Within the car is seen the chief ;
The strong-armed son of the sword.
The hero's name is Cuchullin,
Son of Semo, king of shells.
His red cheek is like my polished yew.
The look of his blue-rolling eye is wide,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Beneath the dark arch of his brow.
His hair flies from his head like a flame,
As bending forward he wields the spear.
Fly, king of ocean, fly! He comes,
Like a storm, along the streamy vale!

SHALL THE FAME OF OSSIAN ENDURE?

Macpherson's "Berrathon."

BUT why art thou sad, son of Fingal?
Why grows the cloud of thy soul?
The chiefs of other times have departed;
They have gone without their fame—
The sons of future years shall pass by,
And another race shall arise.
The people are like the waves of the ocean,
Like the waves of woody Morven—
They pass away in the rustling blast,
And other leaves lift their green heads.
Did thy beauty last, O Rhyno?
Stood the strength of car-borne Oscar?
Fingal himself passed away,
And the halls of his fathers forgot his steps;
And shalt thou remain, ancient bard,
When the mighty have failed?
But my fame shall remain
And grow like the oak of Morven,
Which lifts its head to the storm
And rejoices in the course of the wind.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

THE COMBAT OF FINGAL WITH THE SPIRIT OF LODA.

Macpherson's "Carrie-Thura."

Son of night, retire : call thy winds, and fly !
Why dost thou come to my presence,
With thy shadowy arms ? Do I fear thy gloomy form,
Spirit of dismal Loda ?
Weak is thy shield of clouds :
Feeble is that meteor, thy sword !
The blast rolls them together ; and thou thyself art lost.
Fly from my presence, son of night !
Call thy winds, and fly !

Dost thou force me from my place ?
Replied the hollow voice. The people bend before me.
I turn the battle in the field of the brave.
I look on the nations, and they vanish ;
My nostrils pour the blast of death.
I come abroad on the winds :
The tempests are before my face.
But my dwelling is calm, above the clouds ;
The fields of my rest are pleasant.

Dwell in thy pleasant fields, said the king :
Let Comhal's son be forgot.
Do my steps ascend, from my hills,
Into thy peaceful plains ?
Do I meet thee, with a spear, on thy cloud,
Spirit of dismal Loda ?
Why then dost thou frown on me ?

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Why shake thine airy spear? Thou frownest in vain :
I never fled from the mighty in war.
And shall the sons of the wind
Frighten the king of Morven? No :
He knows the weakness of their arms !

Fly to thy land, replied the form :
Receive the wind, and fly !
The blasts are in the hollow of my hand :
The course of the storm is mine.
The king of Sora is my son,
He bends at the stone of my power.
His battle is around Carric-thura ;
And he will prevail !
Fly to thy land, son of Comhal,
Or feel my flaming wrath !

He lifted high his shadowy spear !
He bent forward his dreadful height.
Fingal, advancing, drew his sword,
The blade of dark-brown Luno.
The gleaming path of the steel
Winds through the gloomy ghost.
The form fell shapeless into air,
Like a column of smoke,
Which the staff of the boy disturbs,
As it rises from the half-extinguished furnace.
The spirit of Loda shrieked, as, rolled into himself,
He rose on the wind.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

GAUL'S APPEAL TO FINGAL.

Macpherson's "Fingal."

"FINGAL, sheath thou thy sword of death ;
And let thy people fight.
We wither away without our fame ;
Our king is the only breaker of shields !
When morning rises on our hills,
Behold, at a distance, our deeds.
Let Lochlin feel the sword of Morni's son !
That bards may sing of me."

" O son of Morni," Fingal replied,
" I glory in thy fame.
Fight ; but my spear shall be near,
To aid thee in the midst of danger.
Raise, raise the voice, ye sons of song !
And lull me into rest.
Here will Fingal lie amidst the wind of night.
And if thou, Agandecca, art near,
Among the children of thy land ;
If thou sittest on a blast of wind,
Among the high-shrouded masts of Lochlin ;
Come to my dreams, my fair one.
Show thy bright face to my soul."

FINGAL AFTER HIS LAST FIGHT.

Macpherson's "Temora."

My son, I hear the call of years ;
They take my spear as they pass along.
Why does not Fingal, they seem to say,
Rest within his hall ?

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Dost thou always delight in blood ?
In the tears of the sad ?
No : ye dark rolling years,
Fingal delights not in blood.
Tears are wintry streams
That waste away my soul.
But when I lie down to rest
Then comes the mighty voice of war.
It awakes me in my hall,
And calls forth all my steel.
It shall call forth no more ;
Ossian, take thou thy father's spear.
Lift it in battle when the proud arise.

.
Father of heroes, Trenmor,
Dweller of eddying winds !
I give thy spear to Ossian,
Let thine eye rejoice.
Thee have I seen at times
Bright from between thy clouds ;
So appear to my son
When he is to lift the spear :
Then shall he remember thy mighty deeds
Though thou art now but a blast.

A REVERIE OF OSSIAN.

“Cath Loda.”

Translation by Mrs. K. Whyte Grant.

WHENCE gushes the torrent of ages past ?

Ah, whither gone ?

And when shall be drained the present, so fast

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Now rushing on?
The source sublime,
The end of time,
Both, both are lost
In folds of dense, slow moving mist!

On thy sounding river, O Time, I turn
My backward gaze;
Thy margin is fringed with deeds that earn
Men's loudest praise:
Here lights thy stream
The lightning gleam
Of helm and glaive;
There, lost in shadow, cowers the slave!

O, dim is the light of the past, and pale
As light of dream;
Or moon-ray that, following athwart the vale,
Reveals the stream:
The radiance thrown
From past renown
Doth not illumine
For us our future, wrapped in gloom!

Come, chosen companion of shield and sword,
My own loved Lyre!
Breathe, soul of joy from the sounding chord,
New strength inspire!
Too long, too long
Mute hast thou hung
Those arms among—
Come, wake anew the voice of song!

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Wake, threefold harmony, sweet and loud ;
 Prolong thy sound
Till swept from the soul is sorrow's cloud,
 Till troop around
 Beloved forms,
 The brave whose arms
 Fought not in vain—
Till round me glows the Past again !

COMAL AND GALVINA.

“Fingal”—Duan II.

Translation by John Whyte.

COMAL was chief of a hundred hills,
His deer drank from a thousand rills,
A thousand rocks with blending sounds
Reverbed the baying of his hounds ;
His countenance was mild and young,
His arm the death of heroes strong.

One was his love, and she was fair,
Like raven wing her glossy hair—
Great Conloch's daughter, full of grace—
A sunbeam pure among her race.
Her dogs she taught to chase the hind,
Her bow-string sounded on the wind.
On Comal brave her soul was set,
Their eyes of love oft kindling met.
In the loud chase their course was one,
And sweet their converse when alone.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

But Gormal also sought her hand,
Dark chief of Ardven's gloomy land ;
He watched their lone steps on the heath,
And wished unhappy Comal's death.

One hunt-day, weary of the field,
When kindly mist their friends concealed,
Galvina fair and Comal brave
Withdrew alone to Ronan's cave.
Comal frequented oft its halls,
His arms hung round its rocky walls ;
A hundred shields of bossy hide,
A hundred helms of steel beside.

"Rest here," he said, "Galvina, dear,
Thou light of Ronan's cave—rest here.
A deer on Mora's brow I see ;
I go, but soon return to thee."
"I fear," she said, "my deadly foe,
Dark Gormal, haunts this cave. But go,
Among thy arms I'll safe remain,
But soon, my love, return again."

He went. She sought his love to test ;
Her fair form in his arms she dressed,
And thus equipped from top to toe,
Strode forth. He thought it was his foe.
His colour changed, his heart beat high,
And darkness dimmed his wrathful eye.
He drew the bow—the arrow fled—
Galvina fell in blood. He sped
With hurried steps, and called his love ;
No answer in the rocks above.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

“Speak, Conloch’s daughter, it is I.”
But echo only mocked his cry.
He saw at length her heaving heart
Beating around the feathered dart.
“Galvina, it is thou,” he cried,
And sank despairing by her side.

The hunters found the hapless pair,
And afterwards he hunted there ;
But oft with silent steps he strode
Round his Galvina’s dark abode.

From ocean came the invading fleet ;
He fought—they fled in foul defeat.
Assailing death he did not shun ;
But who could slay the hero ? None.
Away his dark-brown shield he threw—
An arrow found his bosom true.
He and his loved Galvina sleep
Beside the lonely sounding deep.
The mariner can see their graves
When bounding o’er the northern waves.

THE LAY OF DEIRDRE.

“Cuchulainn Cycle.”

Translation by W. F. Skene, LL.D.

THE story of “Deirdre and the Sons of Uisneach,” one of the oldest and most interesting romances in Gaelic storydom, is found in many MSS., in more or less complete form. The oldest and shortest version is that contained in the twelfth century *Book of Leinster* ; the best and fullest—that in the Glenmasan MS.—is housed in the Advocates’ Library, Edinburgh. The story holds a large place in Celtic literature, and

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

forms the basis of Macpherson's "Darthula." The "Lay" concerns itself with the Scottish portion of the romance; and it very tenderly and beautifully gives expression to the regret of Deirdre, as she sails away to Ireland with Naois, with whom she had lived a happy, lightsome life among the fair glens of Argyll. In his preface to the *Book of the Dean of Lismore*, Dr. Skene, in consideration of certain characteristics of the poem—its touching allusions to Highland scenery, in particular—concludes that "it is hardly possible to suppose that it was not originally composed by a genuine son of Alban."

BELOVED land, that Eastern land,
Alba, with its wonders.
O that I might not depart from it,
But that I go with Naoise.

Beloved is Dunfidgha and Dun Finn;
Beloved the Dun above them;
Beloved is Innisdraighende;¹
And beloved Dun Suibhne.²

Coillchuan! O Coillchuan!
Where Ainnle would, alas! resort;
Too short, I deem, was then my stay
With Ainnle in Oirir Alban.

Glenlaidhe!³ O Glenlaidhe!
I used to sleep by its soothing murmur;
Fish, and flesh of wild boar and badger,
Was my repast in Glenlaidhe.

Glenmasan! O Glenmasan!
High its herbs, fair its boughs.
Solitary was the place of our repose
On grassy Invermasan.

¹ Inistrynich.

² Dun Sween.

³ Glen Luy.

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Gleneitche !¹ O Gleneitche !
There was raised my earliest home.
Beautiful its woods on rising,
When the sun struck on Gleneitche.

Glen Urchain !² O Glen Urchain !
It was the straight glen of smooth ridges.
Not more joyful was a man of his age
Than Naoise in Glen Urchain.

Glendaruadh !³ O Glendaruadh !
My love each man of its inheritance.
Sweet the voice of the cuckoo, on bending bough,
On the hill above Glendaruadh.

Beloved is Draighen and its sounding shore ;
Beloved the water o'er the pure sand.
O that I might not depart from the east,
But that I go with my beloved !

THE DEATH OF FRAOCH ;

OR, ALBIN AND THE DAUGHTER OF MEY.

“Cuchulainn Cycle.”

Translation by Jerome Stone.

HISTORICALLY, the “Death of Fraoch,” from which a short extract is given below, is of the greatest interest, for it was the first translation from an old Gaelic poem ever published. It appeared in the *Scots Magazine*, under the title of “Albin and the Daughter of Mey,” in the year 1756—four years prior to the publication of Macpherson’s *Fragments*. The translator, Jerome Stone, was a teacher in Dunkeld, and a talented youth. The poem takes origin from the Celtic Dragon myth,

¹ Glen Etive.

² Glenorchy.

³ Glendaruel.

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and tells the story of Fraoch's encounter with the Dragon. The title given to the poem by Stone is wholly unwarranted, and simply a caprice of the translator's. In view of what followed, Stone's efforts may well be considered epoch-making. His translations are free, but happily rendered. The three verses which follow—the first and the two last of the poem—will suffice to show his style.

WHENCE come these dismal sounds that fill our ears ?

Why do the groves such lamentation send ?

Why sit the virgins on the hill of tears,

While heavy sighs their tender bosoms rend ?

They weep for Albin with the flowing hair,

Who perished by the cruelty of *Mey* ;

A blameless hero, blooming, young, and fair ;

Because he scorned her passion to obey.

See on yon western hill the heap of stones,

Which mourning friends have raised o'er his bones.

.

Great was the strength of his unconquered hand,

Great was his swiftness in the rapid race ;

None could the valour of his arm withstand,

None could outstrip him in the days of chace.

Yet he was tender, merciful, and kind ;

His vanquished foes his clemency confest ;

No cruel purpose laboured in his mind,

No thought of envy harboured in his breast.

He was all gracious, bounteous, and benign,

And in his soul superior to a king !

But now he's gone, and nought remains but woe

For wretched me ; with him my joys are fled ;

Around his tomb my tears shall ever flow,

The rock my dwelling, and the clay my bed ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Ye maids and matrons from your hills descend,
To join my moan and answer tear for tear ;
With me the hero to the grave attend,
And sing the songs of mourning round his bier ;
Through his own grove his praise we will proclaim,
And bid the place for ever bear his name.

FINGAL'S ADDRESS TO OSCAR.

From Gillies's Collection, 1786.

Translation by Dr. Thomas Mac Lauchlan.

GILLIES, who published the Collection from which this poem is taken, was a bookseller in Perth. His volume is characterized by Dr. Thomas Mac Lauchlan as "perhaps the most interesting collection of Highland song which we possess." The pieces which compose the volume have the true ring of the ancient poetry about them, and as many as twenty-one fragments or whole pieces are Ossianic in character. They were taken down by Gillies from the recitation of gentlemen throughout every part of the Highlands.

SON of my son, so said the king,
Oscar, prince of youthful heroes,
I have seen the glitter of thy blade, and 'twas my pride
To see thy triumph in the conflict.
Cleave thou fast to the fame of thy ancestors,
And do not neglect to be like them.
When Treunmor the fortunate lived,
And Trathull the father of warriors,
They fought each field triumphantly,
And won the fame in every fight.
And their names shall flourish in the song
Commemorated henceforth by the bards.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Oh! Oscar, crush thou the armed hero,
But spare the feeble and the needy ;
Be as the rushing winter, spring-tide, stream,
Giving battle to the foes of the Fingalians,
But as the gentle, soothing, summer breeze
To such as seek for thy help.
Such was Treunmor of victories,
And Trathull of pursuits, thereafter,
And Fingal was a help to the weak,
To save him from the power of the oppressor.
In his cause I would stretch out my hand,
With a welcome I would go to meet him,
And he should find shelter and friendship
Beneath the glittering shade of my sword.

THE BANNERS OF THE FEINNE.

From Mac Callums' Collection, 1816.

Translation by Thomas Pattison ("Gaelic Bards").

ON a hill stood the King of the North, and looked
To the sea, where his proud ships rode ;
Then he looked to the shore, where his camp stretched
along,
And the heroes of Lochlin abode.

Then he turned to the land ; and there, far away,
A terrible hero came,
And above him a banner of Albin's gold
Floated, and shone like a flame.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

"Bard of sweet songs," said the King of the North,

"What banner is this I see ?

And the champion tall at the head of yon host,

Does he lead to victory ? "

"That," said the bard, "is Diarmid Mac Doon,

His is the banner you see ;

When the hosts of the Féinn to the battle go forth,

The first in the fight is he."

"But, bard of the songs, there's another now,

And it is red as blood—

A mighty hero's at its head,

It waves o'er a multitude ? "

"That," said the bard, "is the banner of Raine,

A manly chief and a good ;

Heads are oft cleft 'neath its folds in twain,

And ankles are bathed in blood."

"Again, what banner is this I see,

Thou bard of beautiful song,

Dreadful the chief by its side appears,

And heroes around it throng ? "

"That is the banner of Gaul the Great ;

Yon yellow silken shred

Is the first to advance and the last to retire ;

From its shelter none ever has fled."

"There is another, thou tuneful bard,

And a mighty man at its head,

It waves o'er a host—has it ever waved

O'er a field of the conquered dead ? "

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

"The dark and dread banner of Cailt," said the bard,
"Comes fluttering now to your sight ;
Fame hath it won where the hosts have been great,
And bloody the terrible fight."

"There is one other yet, bard of song and of tale !
Yonder it waves o'er a host,
Like a bird in the air, o'er the roar of the surge,
As it breaks on a storm-travers'd coast."

"That is the besom of Peril, you see,
The standard of Oscar," he said ;
"First in renown in the conflict of chiefs,
Still flutters yon banner of dread."

We reared up the Sunbeam—the standard of Finn ;
Fair gleamed that banner on high,
With its sprangles of gold from the fields of its fame,
As it greeted the morning sky.

There were nine chains of gold tied the flag to the staff,
There were nine times nine chiefs for each chain ;
Sad to the foe was that banner of light—
They strove 'gainst its heroes in vain.

Then Finn spoke aloud, "Bend your heads, O my chiefs,
And redeem your pledge to me ;
Show to Lochlin the hardy deeds he will find
On our hills that look down on the sea."

We rushed to the fray like a torrent,
Down the mountain that rolls in spray ;
And the fire from the strokes of our heavy swords,
In columns of sparks broke away.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Many a shoulder and head was gashed
Ere they turned from us in our ire,
And we heard the wild shrieks of our foes, as they fled,
Like the snake when the heather's on fire.

That was the victory won by our King ;
And I, though now aged and grey—
O many a warrior fell by my hand
On that dire and terrible day.

OSSIAN'S ADDRESS TO THE SETTING SUN.

From Mac Callums' Collection, 1816.

Translation by Dr. Ewen M'Lachlan.

HAST thou left thy blue course in the sky,
Blameless son, of the gold-yellow locks ?
The doors of night open before thee ;
And the pavilion of thy repose is in the west.
The billows crowd slowly around
To view thy bright cheeks :
They lift their heads in fear, when they beheld thee
So lovely in thy sleep, and
Shrink away with awe from thy sides.
Sleep thou on in thy cave, O Sun ;
And let thy return again be with joy.

.
The dark grey clouds of the sky have descended,
And snatched the cheering beam from the hunter :
The leafless branches of the wood are mourning,
And the tender herbs of the mountain
Droop in sadness.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

But the Sun will yet revisit the fair grove,
Whose boughs shall bloom anew ;
And the trees of the young summer
Shall look up smiling, to the son of the sky.

THE DEATH OF OSCAR.

Translation by Thomas Pattison ("Gaelic Bards").

THIS tragical "Lay" is one of the most pathetic productions of the Gaelic muse. In more or less completeness, it is found in all the Collections. By bringing together, in this translation, several versions, Pattison has produced a complete and remarkably effective poem.

THE feast was over ; and the last day dawn'd
Which Oscar was to spend in Cairbar's hall ;
The parting cup was quaff'd, the heroes stood
Arm'd and prepared to go, when Cairbar said,
With his great voice, "Brown Oscar, come from Alba ;
Let us exchange our spear shafts ere we part !"

"Why so exchange," said Oscar, speaking calmly ;
"Thou red-hair'd Cairbar of the port of ships ?
Why so exchange, and the feast hardly o'er ?
Thou knowest, in the day of war and conflict,
My spear is always ready for thine aid."

"Not much for me," said Cairbar—the rude Cairbar ;
"Not much for me, were cess and tribute paid me
By every warrior in your sea-beat isles ;
Not much for me ; whate'er I need to get
From thee, from thine, whene'er my wish I tell."

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

“There’s neither gold nor precious substance, Cairbar,
That might be ask’d for by a manly King,
Without dishonour to himself or us,
But thou or he should have whene’er ’t was ask’d :
But this exchange of shafts without the heads,
It were unjust to ask us such a thing.
Cairbar ! thou hadst not dared have spoken thus,
Hadst thou not known that Fingal is not by.”

“Though Fingal and thy father both were here,
As good as the best day they wore a sword,
I’d ask of them whate’er I ask of thee ;
And what I ask of them or thee, I’ll have.”

“If Fingal and my father both were here,
As good as the best day they wore a sword,
By thine own might thou could’st not then retain
The breadth of thy two soles on land of Erin.”

“I make a vow,” quoth Cairbar, “deer to drive
From side to side of Albin’s sea-girt hills,
And spoil to carry from its plains to Erin.”

“I make a vow, a vow ’gainst that,” quoth Oscar ;
“When thou hast come to Albin for thy sport,
I with this spear will drive thee back to Erin.”

Then Cairbar roar’d—“I make a vow ere that,
A lasting vow, that I will plant my spear
Beneath thy breast, in thy fair body, Oscar !”

“A vow ! a vow !” cried Oscar, in his wrath ;
“I make a vow that I will plant my spear,
Ere that shall happen, in thy forehead, Cairbar.”

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Cold fear and rage, by turns, the warriors shook,
When these fierce words they heard between the chiefs,
When Cairbar's lowering brow they saw, and mark'd
How rose the wrath of Oscar. 'Twas then a bard,
With softest touch upon the harp, wail'd forth
The sounds that prelude a great hero's death.

Then Oscar seized with furious rage his arms,
And look'd around him where his followers stood ;
Few were the chiefs of Alba that were there,
And Cairbar's host was great ; but Oscar's friends
Were train'd to arms, and were full heroes all,
And so they gather'd undismay'd around him.

Then waged the strife. We heard the shouts afar,
And all the din of deadly, furious battle ;
And up we rose, and hasten'd to the scene.
Each, as he reach'd it, joined the wide-spread fight ;
And thus the bitter struggle lasted long ;
And thus did many of our heroes fall.
But who could stay his hand or still his heart,
And Oscar's friends oppress'd, and Oscar's sword,
By numbers wearied, failing in its power ?

We saw him struggling on the woful field ;
We saw him rushing, in the tides of war,
Like a hawk darting on a flight of birds,
Or like the quick spray-spattering cataract.
He strove, like a great strong branch with the wind,
Like an old green tree with the woodman's strokes.
His course was the roll of the furious surge
In winter's storm, on the roar of the shore.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

And, one by one, as we came, we engaged ;
But the long-lasting fight spread far and near,
Till the Sunbeam of battle rose, at last,
Finn's standard, with the heroes by its side ;
Then slowly backward bore the treacherous foe,
Foot after foot, until they fled away—
Scatter'd like sheep, and falling like brown leaves.
The wild pursuit roll'd by, and we were left
Alone—in silence—on the dreadful field !

I bent o'er Oscar, when the fight was done,
As he lay bleeding on the mournful plain.
He was my son ; yet was I not alone
In mourning for my dearest on that day.
Cailta bent over seven of his brave sons ;
And every living man amongst the Féinn,
Amid the grievous slaughter found a friend,
And wept beside the dying and the dead.
Some of the wounded lay and languish'd low,
Unconscious how their life had drained away ;
Some moan'd, some writhed with pain, and could not
 speak.

But some were calm and knew their friends, and gave
Them a kind greeting from their couch of clay ;
But many, many heroes there were dead.
Oh, 't was a grief, an everlasting grief—
A woe to be forgotten never, never !
To look upon that field—the swords, the shields,
That there lay masterless ; the broken spears,
The bloody garments, and the coats of mail,
Borne by brave chiefs unto their last of fields,
From Albin's hills, from homes of Innisgail.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

We ne'er had met so dire a day before—
So bloody, so destructive, full of woe—
So joyless and so sad a victory.

Among a thousand warriors stretch'd and dead
I found my son, my darling, living yet ;
Resting his head on his left arm he lay,
His broken shield beside him, and his sword
Grasp'd in his terrible and strong right hand,
His blood, his priceless blood, on every side .
Flow'd through his harness, soak'd into the ground,
Unstanch'd and stanchless, from a mortal wound.

I dropped my spear upon the earth, and bent
Above him as he lay, and thought—O friend !
How lonely I should be for ever more !
It was a grievous thought. Oscar turned round,
And forth he stretch'd his hand one other time
To greet me—one long last time ere he died ;
Kindly he look'd, and wished me to draw near.
I seized his hand and knelt upon the ground,
And gave a great and bitter cry of grief.
Then, my dear son, whose life was ebbing fast,
Said, " Joy, dear father, that thou art escaped ! "
And I, I could not speak : but Cailta said—
The noble Cailta come to see my son—
" How dost thou feel thyself, dear friend ? " he said.
" As thou wouldst have me—dying on the field.
Red Cairbar's venom'd spear hath pierced my side ;
Mine on the forehead struck him," Oscar said,
" A blow no Leech can heal." Then Cailta probed
The wound red Cairbar's murderous shaft had made,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

And gave a shriek and fainting fell on earth,
When he found out how deadly was the hurt.
“ Dear Oscar, we must part,” at length he cried ;
“ Thou and the Féinne must part ; thy fights are o’er.”
My son replied not, but he press’d my hand,
Then we upraised him softly on our spears,
And to a fair green knoll we bore him silently,
While from the slain they gather’d round and round.
No man his son, his friend, his brother mourn’d,
But all stood near us, and with heavy sighs
They watch’d the hero as he slowly died,
And no one spoke as hour by hour went by.

’Twas now the evening, and the autumn sun
Shone bright and yellow on the fatal field,
When from afar Finn’s standard we descried,
Returning from his triumph and pursuit.
Gladly we met it, and saluted Finn,
But no salute returned he as he strode
In his dark grief to where his grandson lay.
When Oscar saw the King above him bend,
And look with anguish on his dying face,
He slowly spoke, and said, “ I have my wish—
Thus dying in thy presence, noble Finn !
Unconquer’d and with honour, mourn’d by thee.”

Then Finn, the first of heroes, cried with grief,—
“ Sad is my heart, good son of my good son !
To see thee die before me. Now I’m weak.
A heavy curse is on me to my grief ;
It followed me from east to west, till here,
On this sad plain, it struck this fatal blow.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Farewell to fame and battle ; and farewell
The victors' spoils, the triumphs and the joys
Which in this body I have ever had ;
Farewell the feast ; farewell the concourse sweet
By Cona's stream, in Selma's banner'd hall."
When Oscar heard the great king's wailing cry,
He groan'd, and stretch'd his hands, and raised his
head,
And, looking round on all of us, he sigh'd,
And said, " Farewell ! I shall return no more."
Then he sunk back ; and so my hero died ;
And Finn turn'd round, and strode a space away,
And sobb'd and wept. He never wept before
In sight of man—save when Bran died—till now.
And all the people gave three dismal shrieks,
And wail'd and wept until the night returned.

Then Finn came back ; and standing near my side,
He bent again o'er Oscar while he said :—
"The mournful howling of the dogs distress me—
The groaning of the heroes old and grey—
The people's wailing, and their blank despair.
O son ! that I had fallen in thy stead,
In the dire battle with thy treacherous foes,
And thou hadst lived to be a chief and leader,
And bring the Fenians east and west with joy !
O Oscar ; thou wilt never rise again !
O'er thee my old heart, like an elk, is leaping !
Thou wilt return, thou wilt return no more !
'Twas rightly said, ' I shall return no more ! ' "

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

THE DEATH OF DIARMID.

Allan M'Rorie.

From "The Book of the Dean of Lismore."

Translation by Dr. Thomas Mac Lauchlan.

ONE of the most interesting "finds" in connection with the Ossianic Controversy was the discovery by the Highland Society of London of the volume which is now known as *The Book of the Dean of Lismore*. It consists of a collection of Gaelic Poetry, taken down from oral recitations between the years 1512 and 1526, by James M'Gregor, Dean of Lismore, and his brother Duncan. This little volume, which probably gathers up the best floating verse of the time, contains 11,000 lines of Gaelic poetry, 800 of which are genuinely Ossianic in character. Nine of the pieces are superscribed: "The Author of this is Ossian."

GLENSHEE, the vale that close beside me lies,
Where sweetest sounds are heard of deer and elk,
And where the Feinn did oft pursue the chase
Following their hounds along the lengthening vale.
Below the great Ben Gulbin's grassy height,
Of fairest knolls that lie beneath the sun
The valley winds. Its streams did oft run red,
After a hunt by Finn and by the Feinn.
Listen now while I detail the loss
Of one a hero in this gentle band;
'Tis of Ben Gulbin and of generous Finn
And Mac O' Duine, in truth a piteous tale.
A mournful hunt indeed it was for Finn
When Mac O' Duine, he of the ruddiest hue,
Up to Ben Gulbin went, resolved to hunt
The boar, whom arms had never yet subdued.
Though Mac O' Duine of brightest burnished arms,
Did bravely slay the fierce, and furious boar,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Yet Finn's deceit did him induce to yield,
And this it was that did his grievous hurt.
Who among men was so belov'd as he ?
Brave Mac O' Duine, beloved of the schools ;
Women all mourn this sad and piteous tale
Of him who firmly grasped the murderous spear.
Then bravely did the hero of the Feinn
Rouse from his cover in the mountain side
The great old boar, him so well known in Shee
The greatest in the wild boars' haunt e'er seen.
Finn sat him down, the man of ruddiest hue,
Beneath Ben Gulbin's soft and grassy side ;
For swift the boar now coursed along the heath ;
Great was the ill came of that dreadful hunt.
'Twas then he heard the Feinn's loud ringing shout,
And saw approach the glittering of their arms,
The monster wakened from his heavy sleep
And stately moved before them down the vale.
First, to distance them he makes attempt
The great old boar, his bristles stiff on end,
These bristles sharper than a pointed spear,
Their point more piercing than the quiver's shaft.
Then Mac O' Duine, with arms well pointed too,
Answers the horrid beast with ready hand ;
Away from his side then rushed the heavy spear,
Hard following on the course the boar pursued.
The javelin's shaft fell shivered into three,
The shaft recoiling from the boar's tough hide.
The spear hurled by his warm red-fingered hand,
Ne'er penetrated the body of the boar.
Then from its sheath he drew his thin-leav'd sword,
Of all the arms most crowned with victory.
Mac O' Duine did then the monster kill

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

While he himself escaped without a wound.
Then on Finn of the Feinn did sadness fall,
And on the mountain side he sat him down ;
It grieved his soul that generous Mac O' Duine
Should have escaped unwounded by the boar.
For long he sat, and never spake a word,
Then thus he spake, although't be sad to tell :
" Measure, Diarmid, the boar down from the snout,
And tell how many feet's the brute in length ;"
What Finn did ask he never yet refused ;
Alas ! that he should never see his home.
Along the back he measures now the boar,
Light-footed Mac O' Duine of active step.
" Measure it the other way against the hair,
And measure, Diarmid, carefully the boar."
It was indeed for thee a mournful deed,
Furth of the sharply-pointed, piercing arms,
He went, the errand grievous was and sad,
And measured for them once again the boar.
The envenomed pointed bristle sharply pierced
The soul of him the bravest in the field.
Then fell and lay upon the grassy plain
The noble Mac O' Duine, whose look spoke truth ;
He fell and lay along beside the boar
And then you have my mournful saddening tale.
There does he lie now wounded to the death,
Brave Mac O' Duine so skilful in the fight,
The most enduring even among the Feinn,
Up there where I see his grave.
The blue-eyed hawk that dwelt at Essaroy
The conqueror in every sore-fought field
Slain by the poisoned bristle of the boar.
Now does he lie full-stretched upon the hill,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Brave, noble Diarmid Mac O' Duine
Slain, it is shame ! victim of jealousy.
Whiter his body than the sun's bright light,
Redder his lips than blossoms tinged with red ;
Long yellow locks did rest upon his head,
His eye was clear beneath the covering brow,
Its colour mingled was of blue and gray ;
Waving and graceful were his locks behind,
His speech was elegant and sweetly soft ;
His hands the whitest, fingers tipped with red ;
Elegance and power were in his form,
His fair soft skin covering a faultless shape,
No woman saw him but he won her love.
Mac O' Duine crowned with his countless victories,
Ne'er shall he raise his eye in courtship more ;
Or warrior's wrath give colour to his cheek ;
The following of the chase, the prancing steed,
Will never move him, nor the search for spoil.
He who could bear him well in wary fight,
Has now us sadly left in that wild vale.
Glenshee.

AFTER THE FIANNA.

Ascribed to Ossian.

From "The Book of the Dean of Lismore."

Translation by George Sigerson, M.D., F.R.U.I.

IN his *Bards of the Gael and Gall*, Dr. Sigerson furnishes us with several very effective translations from the "Book of the Dean," "done into English after the metres and modes of the Gael." This piece and the next are good examples of the older poets represented in the "Dean's" Book.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Long, this night, the clouds delay,
And long to me was yesternight,
Long was the dreary day, this day,
Long, yesterday, the light.

Each day that comes to me is long—
Not thus our wont to be of old,
With never music, harp nor song,
Nor clang of battles bold.

No wooing soft, nor feats of might,
Nor cheer of chase, nor ancient lore,
Nor banquet gay, nor gallant fight—
All things beloved of yore.

No marching now with martial fire—
Alas, the tears that make me blind—
Far other was my heart's desire
A-hunting stag and hind.

Long this night the clouds delay—
No striving now as champions strove,
No run of hounds with mellow bay,
Nor leap in lakes we love.

No hero now where heroes hurled—
Long this night the clouds delay—
No man like me in all the world,
Alone with grief, and gray.

Long this night the clouds delay—
I raise their grave-carn, stone on stone,
For Fionn and Fianna passed away—
I, Ossian, left alone.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

WHERE IS SWEETEST MUSIC FOUND?

Anonymous.

From "The Book of the Dean of Lismore."

Translation by George Sigerson, M.D., F.R.U.I.

NOBLE news of Song and Valour
Bear I Balor's fort within,
Little heed I who may hearken,
If my song be heard of Finn !

Men were gay in golden Albin
Hill and hall in, far and wide ;
Feast was spread and music flowing
And we saw our Finn preside.

Ossian staunch, and Diarmid stately
Sate by Luay, greatly strong,
And their friends, at feast and foray :
Ancient Conan, Oscar young.

"Speak, ye champion chiefs, rejoicing,"
Rang the voice of Finn around,
"Tell me each in answer meetest,
Where is sweetest music found ?"

"There's one music fit for faming :
Give me gaming," Conan cried,—
Strong his hand for crash of combat,
But his head was sense denied.

"Song of Swords for war, unsheathing,"—
With quick breathing came the word,
"Throng of blows when falling fleetest,"—
Seemed the sweetest Oscar heard.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

- “There is music more endearing,”
Dark-eyed Diarmid did declare ;
“Naught comes nigh the voice’s cadence—
When the maiden’s soft and fair.”
- “Sweetest song at dawning dewy,”—
Said MacLuay, sharp of spear,
“When the bounding dogs are crying,
And we race the flying deer.”
- “This is Song, and this is Music,”—
Spake our lofty Leader old,
“Blowing breeze ’mid moving banners
And an army ’neath the gold.”
- “Then I fear no Bardic passion,
Ossian !” said our Captain strong,
“With my faithful Fianna round me—
These to me are Harp and Song !”
-

SWEET IS MAN’S VOICE IN SOLITUDES.

Ascribed to Ossian.

From “The Book of the Dean of Lismore.”

Translation by Thomas Pattison.

SWEET is man’s voice in solitudes, and sweet
The voice of birds amid the woods of spring—
Sweet is the sound when rock and water meet,
Where Bun-da-treor hears the surges sing :
Sweet are the light winds softly murmuring :
Sweet are the lonely heron’s notes, and sweet
The cuckoo’s, with the aged thoughts they bring :

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Sweet the warm sun which whistling blackbirds
greet—
The sun that brightly shines on Cona's rocky steep.

Sweet is the eagle with her far-heard cry,
Sailing above great Morven's mighty sea,
When sleeps the noon-day in the deep-blue sky,
And o'er the pool the hern bends silently :
Sweet is the lark that sings from heaven on high ;
And one thing more is sweet—Fingal's my sire !
Seven valiant bands he leadeth far and nigh :
When for the chase his hounds are all on fire,
Sweet is their deep-mouthed bay—sweet as the bardic
choir.

LAMENT OF CRIMINA.

From "The Lay of Dargo" in Smith's "*Seana Dàna*." 1787.

Attributed to Ullin.

Translation by C. S. Jerram, M.A.

THE remarkable Ossianic revival, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, served not only to bring to light many genuine examples of ancient Gaelic poetry, but led to the production of a large number of imitations. It is now generally allowed that, for the greater part, the poems which compose Dr. Smith's *Seana Dàna* or Old Lays should be reckoned among the latter. They are nevertheless of great merit, and translations of a few of these, and others from similar sources, follow.

O GHOSTS, from the heights of the clouds,
In quest of your Dargo bend ye down !
Come from your halls, ye maids of Trenmor,
With a robe new-woven for my love !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Why, Dargo, why were our hearts
Close entwined, and our breasts fast bound ?
And why art thou torn from me now,
And I left in sadness all forlorn ?
Like two flowers in the dew that smiled,
Beneath the sun's beam on the rock's warm side
Such were we ; no root had we but one.

.

Endless night encompasses me around ;
In dim darkness is my sun for ever set.
Bright upon Morven shone his face at morn,
But at even it hath passed on its fatal course away.
Shouldst thou forsake me, beam of my joy !
Gladness till the world's last day is mine no more.

.

Dearer than aught under the sun to me is Dargo,
Than even my mourning sire and my gentle mother.
Their eye is often on the sea, and they call me home ;
But to die with my love is all my heart's desire !

I have followed thee afar over sea and dale,
And stretched with thee in the grave I fain would lie.

.

Descend, ye ghosts of the clouds,
From the abodes of the heroes large and free !
Descend on the gray wings of your mist ;
To catch my dying breath be not afraid !
Ye maidens in Trenmor's halls who dwell,
Weave now for Crimina her misty shroud ;
Yet dearer to me is the mantle of my Dargo ;
In thy mantle, O Dargo, let me lie !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

We felt her voice to be failing,
We saw her fingers motionless.
Then raised we Dargo,*—but it was too late ;
Crimina lay lifeless and dead.

PROLOGUE.

From "The Testament of Gaul" (Fionna Ghuill in "Seana Dàna").

Attributed to Ossian.

Translation by C. S. Jerram, M.A.

AWFUL is this stillness of the night,
As she pours upon the glens her dark clouds !
Slumber descends on the youth of the chase
On the plain, with his hound at his knee.
The sons of the mountains he is pursuing
In dreams, and his sleep is departing from him.

Sleep on, ye sons of toil !
Each star now is mounting o'er the heath ;
Sleep on, fleet hound of the course !
Ossian will not disturb thy slumbers.
I myself am watching all alone ;
Soothing to me is the darkness of night.
I rove from glen to glen,
Nor wait expectant for the light of morn.

* Dargo had been but feigning death. In order that the faithfulness of Crimina, the Norwegian, to the Fingalians might be put to the test, it was agreed that a boar should be killed, and its blood sprinkled over the body of Dargo. This was done on the suggestion of "Conan of the little soul."

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Spare thy bright beams, O Sun ;
Spend not so eagerly thy lamp !
As the chief of Fingal's race thy soul is bounteous ;
Yet soon thy grandeur shall decay.
Spare thy lamp with its thousand flames,
In thy blue halls, when thou retirest
Under thy dusky gates, to sleep
Beneath the dark bosom of the twilight.
Spare them, ere they leave thee alone,
Like myself, without one friend to cheer me !
Spare them ! for no hero now beholds
The blue fires of the beauteous beams.

OSCAR'S GHOST.

From " *Losga Taura* " in Smith's " *Seana Dàna*."

Translation by Dr. John Smith.

O SEE ! that form that faintly gleams !
'Tis Oscar come to cheer my dreams ;
On wings of wind he flies away,
O stay, my love ! my Oscar, stay !

Rise, Ossian ! last of Fingal's line,
And mix your sighs and tears with mine ;
O ! tune the harp to doleful lays,
And soothe my soul in Oscar's praise.

The shell is ceased in Ossian's hall,
Since gloomy Cairbar wrought thy fall ;
The roe on Morven lightly bounds,
Nor fears the cry of Oscar's hounds.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Cease, Toscar's daughter ! cease to mourn,
Your hero never will return,
But long shall Oscar's name be known,
And far be spread the chief's renown.

Ne'er fell his sword on vanquished foes,
Though great his soul when danger rose ;
And when by friendship's words betrayed,
The field with death your Oscar spread.

Ye sons of song ! your voices raise,
And sing the mighty warrior's praise ;
That heroes yet unborn may cry—
“ May I, like Oscar, fight and die ! ”

THE VISION OF A FAIR WOMAN.

From the “ Lay of Taura ” in Smith's “ Seana Dàna.”

Translation by Dr. Nigel Mac Neill.

TELL us some of the charms of the stars ;
Close and well set were her ivory teeth ;
White as the cannach upon the moor
Was her bosom the tartan bright beneath.

Her well-rounded forehead shone
Soft and fair as the mountain snow ;
Her two breasts were heaving full ;
To them did the hearts of the heroes flow.

Her lips were ruddier than the rose,
Tender and tunefully sweet her tongue ;
White as the foam adown her side
Her delicate fingers extended hung.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Smooth as the dusky down of the elk
 Appeared her two narrow brows to me ;
Lovely her cheeks were like berries red ;
 From every guile she was wholly free.

Her countenance looked like the gentle buds
 Unfolding their beauties in early spring ;
Her yellow locks like the gold-browed hills,
 And her eyes like the radiance the sunbeams bring.

URAN'S APOSTROPHE TO LORMA.

From "Finan and Lorma" in Smith's "Seana Dàna."

Translation by Charles Stewart.

Ah, Lorma ! where is thy retreat ?
 Where does my slumb'ring love repose ?
Has night o'erta'en thy wandering feet
 Far in the lonely haunts of roes ?
Or on the mountains of the chase,
 Fair huntress of the slender bow ?
In vain thy devious paths I trace—
 Where, oh, my best beloved, art thou ?

Sad is my heart while here forlorn,
 Alone I vainly muse on thee,
And see in thought thy graceful form
 Sleeping beneath some shelt'ring tree.
In cover of some rock art thou,
 Stretched out beside the rushing stream ?
Cold drops will chill thy lovely brow,
 The blasts of night disturb thy dream.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Vain are these fears, within my soul
Thou dwellest as a beam of light ;
Sweet, peaceful dreams my love console
As soft she smiles 'midst silent night.
Spirits that roam in cloudy shade,
Oh, fondly soothe her gentle rest ;
Let no rude blast of gloom invade
The calm that nestles on her breast.

Gentle and tranquil my delight
Slumbers beneath the stormy skies ;
Let not the mountain eagle's flight
Rush through the glen where soft she lies.
While Uran fills thy secret soul,
Sleep on, my love, in rest serene ;
Awake her not, ye streams that roll—
Ye roes, avoid the peaceful scene.

.

Rest on, my love ; should slumber fall
Upon those weary eyes of mine,
Come to my dream, my own, my all ;
Oh ! softly on my slumbers shine.
Tranquil and gentle be thy look,
Such as it ever was to me—
Sweet as the music of the brook,
Calm as the stillness of the sea.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

THE YOUTHS AND THE AGED BARD.

From "Finan and Lorma" in Smith's "Seana Dàna."

Translation by T. Pattison.

IN these opening verses, which Pattison alone gives, the young people around him thus address the aged Ossian (now blind), as they look upon the heavens :

WHITE on the plains shines the moon, O Bard !
And the shadow Cona holds ;
Like a ghost breathes the wind from the mountain,
With a spirit voice in its folds.

There are two cloudy forms before us,
Where its host the dim night shows ;
The sigh of the moor curls their tresses,
As they tread over Alva of roes.

Dusky his dogs come with one,
And he bends his dark bow of yew ;
There's a stream from the side of the sad-faced maid,
Dyes her robe with a blood-red hue.

Hold thou back, O thou wind ! from the mountain,
Let their image a moment stay ;
Nor sweep with thy skirts from our eyesight,
Nor scatter their beauty away.

O'er the glen of the rushes, the hill of the hinds,
With the vague wandering vapour they go ;
O Bard of the times that have left us !
Aught of their life canst thou show ?

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

OSSIAN.

The years that have been they come back as ye speak—
To my soul in their music they glide ;
Like the murmur of waves in the far inland calm,
Is their soft and smooth step by my side.

FINN'S QUESTIONS TO GRANEEN.

“ Legends of the Fœan.”

Translation by Alexander Gibb.

Finn.—Lady, if thou the queen of wit would'st pass,
Tell me what is more numerous than the grass?

Lady.—Dew, son of Cumal ! On a single blade
A hundred drops of dew are often spread.

F.—What's hotter than the fire, canst tell me then?

L.—The reasoning of a woman 'twixt two men.

F.—What's quicker than the winds, the quick
winds meeting?

L.—A woman's fancy betwixt two men flitting.

F.—What's blacker than the raven?

L.—Death, in sooth.

F.—What's whiter than the snow?

L.—There is the truth.

F.—What is the ship will every cargo hold?

L.—A smith's tongs, it will carry hot or cold.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

F.—What is it that will bind nor lock nor chain?

L.—A friend's eyes who to see his friend is fain,
Where'er the dear one in his presence wends
Still on the loved form the eye attends.

F.—What blushes redder than the crimson blood?

L.—The face of a man, hospitable and good,
When with confusion and with shame oppressed
For lack of food to give a stranger guest.

F.—What's sharper than a blade that strikes a blow?

L.—There is the contumely of a foe.

F.—What food the best the heavens give us to use?

L.—Milk; it will take in any form we choose,
Or drunk, or pressed in curds, in butter too;
Babes it will feed, and old men's strength renew.

F.—What is the best jewel to have?

L.— A knife;
If wielded well 'twill save the perilled life.

F.—What brittler is than the sow thistle, tell?

L.—The words of a boar-pig that says nought well.

F.—What's softer than the down upon the cheek?

L.—The palm that doth the cheek's embracing seek.

F.—What deed the best and for brave heroes fit?

L.—A noble action and a low conceit.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

THE AGED BARD'S WISH.

Anonymous.

Translation by Dr. Hugh Mac Millan.

THIS attractive poem was, until recent years, supposed to be a genuine product of earlier times, but it is now believed to belong, like certain other poems of great merit—Mordubth, Collath, and others—to the “Macpherson” period. It was first published in 1776 in the Collection of Ronald Mac Donald, who was son of the poet Alexander Mac Donald, and it is probable that Ronald was himself the author. It has also been attributed to Mrs. Grant of Laggan, who has furnished a translation of much merit.

OH! bear me where the streamlets stray,
With calm slow footsteps o'er the lea;
My head beneath the birch-shade lay,
And thou, oh! sun, be kind to me!

My side stretch gently on the bank,
Which soft winds cool and flowers bestrew,
My feet laved by the grasses rank,
That bend beneath the noontide dew.

Let primrose pale with beauty dress
My couch, through scent of waters green,
My hand reclined, the daisy press,
And *calvi* * at my ear be seen.

Let blossom-laden trees surround
My glen's high overhanging brow;
And let the aged crags resound
With songs of birds from every bough.

* *Ealbhuidh*, St. John's wort.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

From cliffs with ivy mantled o'er,
Let fountains pour their copious flood,
And echo multiply the roar
Of waters through the solitude.

Let voice of hill to hill repeat
The thousand lowings of the herd,
That by the rural cadence sweet,
My heart's deep pulses may be stirred.

Let the soft wing of every gale
The bleatings of the fold prolong,
The timid lambkins lonely wail,
The ewe's quick answer to her young.

Let frisking calves around me stray
Along the stream, or upland high ;
And let the kid, tired of its play,
Upon my bosom fearless lie.

Oh ! let me hear the hunter's tread,
And bay of dogs upon the heath ;
Then youth shall crown my hoary head,
And happy visions round me wreath.

The marrow of my bones shall thrill,
When the wild chase I hear again ;
My feet leap swiftly up the hill
At the glad shout, "The stag is slain !"

Methinks I see the faithful hound
That followed me at eve and morn,
The moors o'er which I loved to bound,
The rocks that echoed back my horn.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

The cave where we reposed, when night
O'ertook us in our wild employ,
Where by the wood-fire blazing bright,
The hunter's cup inspired our joy.

The smoking deer, Treig's sounding wave,
Gave food and music for our feast;
And in that cave, though ghosts should rave,
And mountains roar, deep was our rest.

I see Ben-Ard's sky-piercing rocks
Above a thousand mountains rise;
The dreams of stags are in his locks,
The dark cloud on his summit lies.

Sgur-Eilt's broad shoulders loom in view,
And the green hill with fir trees crowned,
Where first is heard the lone cuckoo,
And elk and roe unharmed abound.

A pine-fringed tarn lies in its cup,
O'er which the wild ducks swiftly swim;
Beyond, a dark strath opens up,
With rowans dipping in its stream.

Oh! let the swan that left her home
In that cold realm where tempests rave,
Where never sail can mock the foam,
Or oaken prow divide the wave—

Glide graceful o'er the loch at rest,
Or soar the summer clouds among,
And pour forth from her wounded breast
The mournful music of her song!

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

I love to hear the plaintive wail,
That tells the story of her woe,
Borne by the echoes on the gale,
In soothing sadness round me flow.

From what land do the breezes stray
On which thy sorrow's voice is borne,
Oh! youth that wandered far away,
And left my hoary locks forlorn?

Do tears bedim thy modest eyes,
Oh! maiden with the hand of snow?
Blest is the smooth young cheek that lies
Within its narrow bed laid low!

Say, since my aged vision fails,
Oh! wind, where is the reed's resort,
Through which an eerie music wails,
And by whose side the fishes sport?

Oh! raise me with a tender hand,
And place me 'neath the birken shade,
That when the sun at noon shall stand,
Its green shield may be o'er my head.

Then shalt thou come, oh! starry dream,
That glidest through the realms of night,
And bring to me a soothing gleam
Of vanished days of joy and light!

My soul, the lovely maid beholds,
Within the shady oaken grove,
Her white hand 'mid her locks of gold,
Her blue eye on her youthful love.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

He sings most sweetly by her side,
And scarce her lips draw in the breath;
Her heart swims in the music's tide,
And deer stop listening on the heath.

'Tis hushed now, and her smooth white breast
Heaves to her love's in rapturous bliss;
Her rosy lips are closely pressed
To his in one long honied kiss.

Oh! be ye happy, lovely pair!
Who've wakened in my soul a gleam
Of joy that I no more may share;
May love for ever round you beam!

Oh! pleasant dream! hast thou thus gone?
Come back; let me but one glimpse hail!
Alas! thou wilt not hear my moan;
Then oh! ye cherished hills, farewell!

I do not see you now, adieu!
Thou comely youth, thou lovely maid!
A summer's joy was given to you,
But ah! my winter ne'er can fade.

Oh! carry me where I can hear
The cascade murmuring afar;
And let my harp and shell be near,
And shield that saved my sires in war.

Then, gentle breeze, that lov'st to stray!
Oh! come with kindness o'er the wave,
And swiftly bear my shade away
To the bright island of the brave;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Where those who long have left our arms,
Whose absence we have sorely wept,
Are deaf to music's sweetest charms,
And in soft chains of slumber kept.

Oh! open to my weary ghost
The hall where Daol and Ossian dwell;
The night shall come, the bard be lost,
And none his hiding-place may tell.

But yet, before the hour is come,
In which my spirit shall be borne
To Ardven, and the bard's bright home,
From whence none ever may return—

Give me, to cheer the lonely way,
My much-loved harp and soothing shell,
And ending thus my life's last day,
I'll bid them both for aye farewell!

(b) EARLY GAELIC VERSE OTHER THAN OSSIANIC.

REMINISCENCES OF IONA.

St. Columba, 521-597.

Translation by Professor O'Curry.

DELIGHTFUL would it be to me to be in Uchd Ailiun
On the pinnacle of a rock,
That I might often see
The face of the ocean ;
That I might see its heaving waves
Over the wide ocean,
When they chant music to their Father
Upon the world's course ;
That I might see its level sparkling strand,
It would be no cause of sorrow ;
That I might hear the song of the wonderful birds,
Source of happiness ;
That I might hear the thunder of the crowding waves
Upon the rocks ;
That I might hear the roar by the side of the church
Of the surrounding sea ;
That I might see its noble flocks
Over the watery ocean ;
That I might see the sea monsters,
The greatest of all wonders ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

That I might see its ebb and flood
In their career ;
That my mystical name might be, I say,
“ Cul-ri-Erin ” ;
That contrition might come upon my heart
Upon looking at her ;
That I might bewail my evils all,
Though it were difficult to compute them ;
That I might bless the Lord
Who conserves all,
Heaven with its countless bright orders,
Land, strand, and flood ;
That I might search the books all,
That would be good for any soul ;
At times kneeling to Beloved Heaven ;
At times at psalm-singing ;
At times contemplating the King of Heaven,
Holy the Chief ;
At times at work without compulsion ;
This would be delightful.
At times pulling *duilisc* from the rocks ;
At times fishing ;
At times giving food to the poor ;
At times in a carcair [solitary cell].
The best advice in the presence of God
To me has been vouchsafed.
The King whose servant I am will not let
Anything deceive me.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

I PRAISE THEE, CHRIST.

Muireadhach Albannach (*circa* 1180).

From "The Book of the Dean of Lismore."

Translation by Dr. Nigel Mac Neill.

I PRAISE Thee, Christ, that on Thy breast
A guilty one like me may rest ;
And that Thy favour I can share ;
And on my lips Thy Cross may bear.

O Jesus, sanctify my heart,
My hands and feet and every part ;
Me sanctify in Thy good grace,—
Blood, flesh, and bones, and all my ways.

I never cease committing sin ;
For still its love resides within :
May God His holy fragrance shed
Upon my heart and on my head.

Great glorious One, vouchsafe relief
From all the ills that bring me grief ;
Ere I am laid beneath the sod,
Before me smooth my way to God.

THE FAILING ART.

Doncad Mor of Lennox (*circa* 1450).

From "The Book of the Dean of Lismore."

Translation by George Sigerson, M.D., F.R.U.I.

A PATHETIC poem, picturing the minstrel who, though conscious of decaying powers, still persists in despairing efforts after success.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

GRIEVE for him whose voice is o'er
When called once more to meet with men ;
Him whose words come slow as sighs,
Who ever tries and fails again.

Never now he swells the air,
Nor rolls the fair and faultless lay—
Harp he cannot set aside,
Nor wake, when tried, its minstrelsy.

Yet his tinkling will not cease,
Nor bide in peace ; he still would sing—
When no man can tell his words
Nor hear the frail chords, faltering.

Grieve for him who fails in fame,
Nor keeps his name where none impeach ;
Him who strives, and still in vain,
That fruit to gain, he cannot reach.

Did I yearn such fruit to gain
I should not strain without reprieve ;
I would tear the tree from clay,
Let whoso pray, or rage, or grieve.

LOVE UNTOLD.

Isabel Stewart, First Countess of Argyll (*circa* 1459).

From "The Book of the Dean of Lismore."

Translation by Dr. George Sigerson.

WOE to one whose wound is love,
Be the reason what may be ;
Who can heart from heart remove ?
Sad the fate that follows me.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Love I gave my love unknown,
Never tongue the tale may speak ;
Soon, unhealed, it shall be shown
In fading face and thinning cheek.

He to whom I gave my love
(Ear shall hear not, none shall know)
He has bonds eternal wove
For me,—an hundred fold of woe.

THE PRAISE OF THE MAC GREGOR.

Finlay MacNab, "the red-haired Bard."
From "The Book of the Dean of Lismore."
Translation by Prof. John Stuart Blackie.

IAN DUBH MAC GREGOR of Glenstrae, whose praise is sung by
the Bard, was buried at Dysart in Glenorchy, 26th May, 1519.

"I've been a stranger long
To pleasant-flowing matter ;
I'm tired of lashing fools
With unproductive satire.
I've dwarfed my muse for nought,
But now she shall grow bigger
By chant of lofty theme,
The praise of the Mac Gregor.
A prince indeed is he,
Who knows the craft of ruling,
Well taught in each degree
Of proper princely schooling.
No lies there needs to coin ;
The duty of the poet

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Commands to know the truth,
And when he knows to show it.
His courage in his breast
Is one long breath of daring ;
Bold, but when mercy calls,
Not deaf to gentle sparing.
Mac Gregor of the Blows
They call my prince most rightly,
For when his arm comes down,
In sooth it comes not lightly.
You never wait in vain,
For him to make a quorum,
When forth they ride to drive
The flocks and herds before them.
Myself will sing his praise,
The first in breast of battle,
Or over Lowland braes
To drive the lifted cattle."

THE COQUETTE.

John MacVurich.

From "The Book of the Dean of Lismore."
Translation from MacLean's "Literature of the Celts."

My rage and wrath are great
For how she's grieving me ;
I see her sweet soft skin
Like white foam on the sea.

So rosy is her hand ;
Her lips like berries red :
My soul she holds while sleep
At night flies from my bed.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

I fancied she was nigh,
And that she smiled on me ;
But since my grief began
The maid I cannot see.

Her raven curly locks
Are prettily arrayed ;
Five lovers there are knit
To the name of the fair maid.

O that she were my own !
Then I should be so blest !
My love for evermore
To press her to my breast !

MALEDICTION ON THE HEAD OF DIARMID O'CAIRBRE.

John of Knoydart.

From "The Book of the Dean of Lismore,
Translation by Dr. Thomas MacLauchlan.

THIS poem refers to the death in 1490 of Angus Og of the Isles, who had been assassinated by his own harper, "Mac I Cairbre." The lines more particularly commemorate the punishment of the assassin, who was drawn between horses.

Thou head of Diarmid O'Cairbre,
Though great be thy trouble and pain,
I grudge thee not all thou hast suffered,
Although it be painful to tell.

I grudge not though thy ragged locks
Be searched by the winds from the glens,
I grudge thee not that thou art bound,
Thou head of Diarmid O'Cairbre !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Pity the thought ere filled men's breasts,
That thy friendship was not hatred ;
Pity, alas ! thou turn'st not back,
Thou head of Diarmid O'Cairbre !

Thou hast the king of Isla slain,
Who freely gave his wine and money,
Him of the soft and flowing locks,
Thou head of Diarmid O'Cairbre !

Isla, king of well-filled horns,
Who with his friends so kindly dealt ;
Alas ! who gashed his soft white skin,
Thou head of Diarmid O'Cairbre !

Beloved was that liberal hand,
Which never grudged his gold or silver,
And which in feast or hunt was first,
Thou head of Diarmid O'Cairbre !

It is my prayer to th' Apostle's King,
He who preserves by His great power,
That He from pain may him e'er keep,
Thou head of Diarmid O'Cairbre !

Thou head !

MAC GREGOR'S LULLABY.

Mrs. Gregor Mac Gregor, 1552.

Translation by T. Pattison.

MAC GREGOR'S LULLABY is one of a very limited number of poems which adorn the Gaelic Muse in the latter half of the 16th century. Its author was the daughter of Colin Campbell

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

of Glenorchy, and wife of Gregor Mac Gregor, who, with his father and brother, was beheaded on 16th June, 1552, at the instance (it is asserted) of Colin Campbell of Glenorchy, Campbell of Glenlyon, and Menzies of Rannoch.

EARLY on a Lammas morning,
With my husband was I gay ;
But my heart got sorely wounded
Ere the middle of the day.
Ochan, ochan, ochan uiri,
Though I cry, my child, with thee—
Ochan, ochan, ochan uiri,
Now he hears not thee nor me !

Malison on judge and kindred,
They have wrought me mickle woe ;
With deceit they came about us—
Through deceit they laid him low.

Had they met but twelve Mac Gregors,
With my Gregor at their head ;
Now my child had not been orphaned,
Nor these bitter tears been shed.

On an oaken block they laid him,
And they spilt his blood around ;
I'd have drunk it in a goblet
Freely, ere it reached the ground.

When I reached the plain of Balloch,
I got there nor rest nor calm ;
But my hair I tore in pieces—
Wore the skin from off each palm !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Oh ! could I fly up with the skylark—
Had I Gregor's strength in hand
The highest stone that's in yon castle
Should lie lowest on the land.

Would I saw Finlarig blazing,
And the smoke of Balloch smelled,
So that fair, soft-handed Gregor
In these arms once more I held.

While the rest have all got lovers
Now a lover have I none ;
My fair blossom, fresh and fragrant,
Withers on the ground alone.

.

Far, far better be with Gregor
'Mong the heather in its prime,
Than with mean and Lowland baron
In a house of stone and lime.

.

Bahu, bahu, my little nursling—
Oh ! so tender now and weak ;
I fear the day will never brighten
When revenge for him you'll seek.
Ochan, ochan, ochan uiri,
Though I cry, my child, with thee—
Ochan, ochan, ochan uiri,
Yet he hears not thee nor me !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

THE OLD OWL OF THE SRON.

(AN COMHACHAG.)

Attributed to Donald Mac Donald.

Translation by Prof. John Stuart Blackie. (Extract).

MAC DONALD, better known as *Dòmhnall Mac Fhiullaidh nan Dàn*, was celebrated both as a hunter and a poet. His period is uncertain, but he would seem to have flourished before the era of firearms. In his old age, Donald married a young woman who had little sympathy for him or for his aged hound, and one day she brought home an old owl which she seems to have thought would make a fit companion for the poet and his dog. The poem takes the form of a dialogue between Donald and the owl. It is spirited and original, and its venatorial references compare not unfavourably with the efforts in the same direction of the hunter-bard of Glenorchy. The poem extends to 64 quatrains.

O poor old owl of the Sron,
Hard is your bed this night in my room ;
But if that you be as old as Clan Donald
You had cause enough in your day for gloom !

“ I am as old as the oak on the moor,
By many a wint'ry blast o'erblown ;
And many a sapling grew to a tree
Ere I became the old owl of the Sron.”

Sith you say you are so very old,
Confess your sins before you die,
I'll be the priest this night, and you
Tell all the truth, and nothing deny !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

"I never broke into a church,
Or stole a 'kerchief, or told a lie ;
I never gadded abroad with a beau,
But a chaste old lady at home was I."

.

Wild times were in Lochaber, I trow,
Harrying east and harrying west ;
When you were frowning with eyebrows grim,
A little brown bird, in a little brown nest.

"Some of my sires betwixt the Fearsaid
And the Inch were lodged full well,
And some at Deating were nightly heard,
Hooting at sound of the Vesper bell.

And when I saw the plundering clans
Striking and slaying and driving about ;
On the nodding cliff I took my stand,
And there I kept a safe look-out."

O crag of my heart ! O nodding cliff !
Joy of all birds so fresh and fair ;
'Tis there I was born, and there the stag
Stands and snuffs the breezy air.

.

Pleasant to hear was the rustle of leaves
On the sheer-sided mountain's breast,
When the antlered hind on greenwood shade,
At heat of noon lay down to rest.

.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Fair is the stag to behold in his pride
When he comes down from the chase on the Ben ;
Son of the hind that never bowed
His head to the hunters of the Glen.

.

Better than mumbling of an old man,
Roasting of corn to keep him warm,
Is the roar of the stag, which smells of manhood,
Shaking the mountains like a storm.

.

Since I was born, and snuffed the braes,
The stag was my friend, and the deer was my fellow ;
And only three colours brought joy to mine eye,
These were the dappled, the roan, and the yellow.

.

Small joy was mine, when my mother said,
Go bait your hook, and fish in the seas ;
But the heart within me leapt to follow
The stag up the Ben in the face of the breeze.

Dear to me is the chase of the stag
When I sweep the moor with the range of my eye ;
Sweeter the bay of the hound than the flap
Of the sail, when the breeze comes whistling by.

.

But woe is me, 'tis past, 'tis past !
The men who rejoiced shall rejoice no more
In the stir of the chase, in bay of the hounds,
The laugh, and the quaff, and the jovial roar !

.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

O, if I were sitting this day,
In the Fairies' dwelling high on the Ben
At the head of Loch-Treig, where the red troops pass
As they flee from the track of the hunting men.

.

I would see the strath of the cattle,
And the Mam-Corrie would be near,
Where my whistling shaft oft-times
Opened a gap in the hide of the deer.

.

But snapt this day is the bond that bound me,
Mother of hills, Craig Shellach to thee ;
Never to thee shall I up-climb,
And never shalt thou come down to me !

.

And here I sit with my broken bow,
Dragging the hours how best I can,
With a fair young heifer frisky and gay,
Scarce half-content with a feckless old man.

O thou white hound, hoary and stiff
In the last stage, thou art my brother,
We shall shout and bark no more,
Though for a time we were jolly together !

Many a stag the ben gave me,
To you the wood full many a roe ;
We have no cause to blush, old fellow,
Though now old age hath laid us low.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

When I had two legs to walk on,
I scaled the Ben light-footed and strong,
But now that I am fitted with three,
Softly and slowly I trail me along.

.

O ! Old Age, though rough and wrinkled,
Blar-eyed, hateful in every degree ;
How should I suffer thee, thou leper,
To take my bow by force from me !

.

But Old Age replied and said,
“ I am your master—know your place ;
Better for you than a bow is a stick
To prop your back, and steady your pace ! ”

(c) MODERN GAELIC VERSE.

WITH the approach of the seventeenth century a striking change took place in the "form and complexion" of Gaelic poetic literature. The bardic systems with their strict rules of structure, their severe technicalities, and limited range of treatment, as exemplified in what is known as Ossianic verse, gave place to a freer method of versifying; and many new rhythms and musical metres were speedily introduced. In this revolution, for revolution it was, Mary Mac Leod, the poetess of Harris, was conspicuous. In her untutored efforts towards greater freedom and naturalness, she speedily found many followers, for she was the herald of a brilliant galaxy of poets and poetesses who imitated her unfettered style, and adorned the Gaelic muse with many productions of high merit.

THE PRAISE OF MAC LEOD OF MAC LEOD.

Mary Mac Leod, 1569-1674.

Translation by Professor John Stuart Blackie.

MARY NIGHEAN ALASTAIR RUADH, as Mary Mac Leod is familiarly called, leads the van among the goodly company of post-Reformation Gaelic singers. Mac Kenzie, in his "Beauties of Gaelic Poetry," speaks of her as "the inimitable poetess of the Isles" (she was born at Rowdil, Harris), and as "the most original of all our poets." Mary was nurse to five lairds of the Mac Leods, and two of the lairds of Applecross; and spent a large part of her life at Dunvegan Castle. After a period of banishment to Mull, on account of some rhyming liberties she had taken with the chief, she wrote this Ode in his praise.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

I.

I sit on a knoll
All sorrowful and sad,
And I look on the grey sea
In mistiness clad,
And I brood on strange chances
That drifted me here,
Where Scarba and Jura
And Islay are near.

II.

Where Scarba and Jura
And Islay are near ;
Grand land of rough mountains,
I wish thee good cheer.
I wish young Sir Norman
On mainland and islands
To be named with proud honour,
First chief of the Highlands !

III.

To be praised with proud honour,
First chief of the Highlands,
For wisdom and valour,
In far and in nigh lands ;
For mettle and manhood
There's none to compare
With the handsome Macleod
Of the princeliest air.

IV.

And the blood through his veins,
That so proudly doth fare,
From the old kings of Lochlinn
Flows richly and rare.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Each proud earl in Alba
Is knit with his line,
And Erin shakes hands with him
Over the brine.

v.

And Erin shakes hands with him
Over the brine ;
Brave son of brave father,
The pride of his line,
In camp and in council,
Whose virtue was seen,
And his purse was as free
As his claymore was keen.

vi.

And his purse was as free
As his claymore was keen ;
From such stem what wonder
Such sapling hath been ;
Large-souled and free-handed ;
And who died of thee,
Clan Rory of banners
Brought dying to me.

vii.

Clan Rory of banners
O never from thee
May another death-message
Be wafted to me !
Rare jewel of mortals,
Though banned from my sight,
With my heart I thee worship,
Thou shapeliest knight !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

VIII.

With my heart I thee worship,
Thou shapeliest knight,
Well girt in the grace
Of the red and the white ;
With an eye like the blaeberry
Blue on the brae,
And cheeks like the haws
On the hedge by the way.

IX.

With a cheek like the haws
On the hedge by the way,
'Neath the rarest of locks
In rich curly display ;
And the guests in thy hall
With glad cheer shall behold
Rich choice of rare armour
In brass and in gold.

.

XII.

O dear Son of Mary,
To thee is my prayer,
From danger preserve him,
Whate'er he may dare,
When he tracks the wild deer
The lone mountains among,
And climbs the steep corrie,
With foot firm and strong.

XIII.

And climbs the steep corrie,
With foot firm and strong,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

And pets the old dogs,
And gives law to the young,
Where from touch of his prowess
The blood soon shall flow
Of the deer white behind,
And the red-hided doe.

XIV.

Of the stag and the red deer,
Where ranged in a row,
Thyself and thy comrades
Shall gallantly show,
Well-trained in the chase,
And well-tried in the weather,
And never at fault
With their chief on the heather !

THE DAY OF INVERLOCHY.

John Mac Donald (Iain Lom), 1620 (?)–1710.

Translation by Prof. John Stuart Blackie.

IAIN LOM, who belonged to the Keppoch family, was not only a man possessed of striking poetical talents, but a man of strong character, and of considerable political influence. A keen Jacobite, he proved of the greatest assistance, in many ways, to Montrose during his wars ; and in the affairs of his clan made his influence effectively felt. By Charles II., John was created Gaelic poet-laureate, and was awarded a pension. His manly spirit and lyrical fervour are well displayed in the poems which follow.

Did you hear from Cille-Cummin
How the tide of war came pouring ?
Far and wide the summons travelled,
How they drave the Whigs before them !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

From the castle tower I viewed it,
High on Sunday morning early,
Looked and saw the ordered battle
Where Clan Donald triumphed rarely.

Up the green slope of Cuil-Eachaidh,
Came Clan Donald marching stoutly ;
Churls who laid my home in ashes,
Now shall pay the fine devoutly !

Though the earldom has been groaning
Seven long years with toil and trouble,
All the loss to plough and harrow
They shall now repay with double !

From thy side, O Laird of Lawers,
Though thy boast was in thy claymore,
Many a youth, your father's clansman,
Ne'er shall rise to greet the day more !

Many a bravely-mounted rider,
With his back turned to the slaughter,
Where his boots won't keep him dry now,
Learns to swim in Nevis water.

On the wings of eager rumour,
Far and wide the tale is flying,
How the slippery knaves, the Campbells,
With their cloven skulls are lying !

O'er the frosted moor they travelled,
Stoutly with no thought of dying,
Where now many a whey-faced lubber,
To manure the fields is lying.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

From the height of Tom-na-harry,
See them crudely heaped together,
In their eyes no hint of seeing,
Stretched to rot upon the heather !

Warm your welcome was at Lochy,
With blows and buffets thickening round you,
And Clan Donald's groovèd claymore,
Flashing terror to confound you !

Hot and hotter grew the struggle,
Where the trenchant blade assailed them ;
Sprawled with nails on ground Clan Duine,
When the parted sinew failed them.

Many a corpse upon the heather,
Naked lay, once big with daring,
From the battle's hurly-burly,
Drifting blindly to Blarchaorainn.

And another tale I'll tell you,
Never clerk declared more truly,
How the leal and loyal people
Scared the rebel folk unruly.

John of Moydart, dark the day was,
But the sail was bright that bore thee,
When thou kept thy trysting fairly,
And the Barbreac bowed before thee !

Alastair, I praise thy voyage,
Rich in glory, rich in plunder,
Alban greeted thee with joyance,
And Strathbogie's cock knocked under.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

If the ill bird dulled his splendours,
When he should have shone most brightly,
With brave birds of ampler pinion,
We can learn to bear it lightly !

Alastair, with sharp-mouthed claymore,
Thou didst vow to work their ruin ;
Quick their heels to flee the castle,
Quicker thou their flight pursuing !

Had the men of Mull been with thee,
Thou hadst screwed them down more tightly,
Some who fled had choked the heather,
With their traitor trunks unsightly !

Gallant son of gallant father,
Where thou warrest, thou art winner ;
Woe, Saxon, to thy crazy stomach,
When MacCholla sours thy dinner !

By the field of Goirtean-oar,
Who may take his summer ramble,
He will find it fair and fattened
By the best blood of the Campbell !

If I could, I would be weeping,
For your shame and for your sorrow,
Orphans' cry and widows' wailing,
Through the long Argyll to-morrow.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

THE DEATH OF GLENGARRY.

John Mac Donald.

Translation by Donald Campbell.

When in the morning I arose
Pleasure was not my aim.
Is there no end to Albin's woes,
To deaths 'mong men of fame?
The manly leader of the race
Who own the Garrian-glen,
Is off to his last resting-place,
Borne high by sorrowing men—
The chieftain lofty, true, and bold,
Who never his allegiance sold.

Not safe were they who rashly met
Thy warriors, stern and true,
When the proud heather-badge was set
In all their bonnets blue;
When thy brave banner waved on high,
And thou thyself wert seen,
With battle kindling in thine eye,
To draw thy broad-sword keen—
Then, then 'twas time for Albin's foes
To fly their fierce, their deadly blows.

That praise, that early praise was thine,
And spread thy well-known fame afar;
Thou didst on all occasions shine,
The wisest leader in the war.
No serried red-coats daunted thee,
Although their well-aimed volleys rolled

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Upon thy ranks, from musketry
That oft in deadly slaughter told :
Thy just distinctions ever were—
The wise to lead, the bold to dare.

Thy lineage is, for blood and length,
In Albin's annals unexcelled,
And formed of Chieftains famed for strength,
Who in the deadly charge compelled
Steeds fierce and fleet, that harnessed shone
Like meteors coursing through the sky ;
While in their sells, as on a throne,
They towered in their war panoply ;
And none of them has been constrained
To deeds that have that lineage stained.

Since some in battle have forgot
How their brave fathers plied their steel,
No refuge has our country got
From ruthless Fortune's crushing wheel,
Although Clanndonuill on that day,
As ever, clothed them with renown ;
Our heroes have been *wede* away,
In fruitless battles one by one ;
And now we've lost the worthiest lord
That in these battles drew his sword.

It was our country's destiny
To lose three pillars of the throne—
Heroes who, in adversity,
For daring, proudly, greatly shone :
Sir Donald, our leader when combined ;
Clanronald, captain of our men ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Alastair, generous, good and kind,
Chief of the Garry's far-famed glen ;
Clanndonuill's ranks no more will see
Leaders illustrious as the three.

When other chiefs fled from their lands,
Our heroes, stern and unsubdued,
Rallied their bold, their kindred bands,
And for their king and country stood ;
Aye stood prepared in arms to die,
When war should his fierce tocsin sound,
Or to achieve a victory
That should their treacherous foes confound ;
Such were our chiefs, than maidens mild,
But, roused to war, than beacons wild.

ON CROWNING CHARLES II.

John Mac Donald.

Translation by Donald Campbell (Extract).

UPON my elbow calmly leaning,
Within the lovely mountain glen,
My mind indulged itself in dreaming
Of the strange deeds and lives of men !

.

With staff in hand, the while I hasten
To welcome home my native king,
Why should I doubt that he will listen
To the leal counsel I may bring ?—

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Counsel from clans and chiefs true-hearted,
Who suffered in their country's cause,
Which through the royal bard imparted,
Should warn him to respect the laws ;

But not the men whose conduct baneful
Has scattered ruin o'er the land,
And answered but with taunts disdainful,
Those whom they robbed of wealth and land.

Remember, Charles Stewart, ever,
The lesson taught thee by the past,
Forgetting truth and justice never,
If thou wouldst that thy reign may last.

Think, since the throne thou hast ascended,
Without the aid of spear or sword,
How thy own rights may be defended,
And, eke, thy people's rights restored.

No Machiavel has yet propounded
The means to make the throne secure,
Save when the people's rights are founded
On a just basis, broad and sure.

But leniency is not now wanted ;
A wise severity were just :
Let those who are already sainted,
E'en go where they have placed their trust.

Why should we grudge these men to Heaven
That have their treasure hoarded there ?
Since they have made their road so even,
Dismiss them while accounts are square !

.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

GIVE ME THE FOREST WIDE AND HIGH.

Archibald Mac Donald (*An Ciaran Mabach*), circa 1661.

Translation by Donald Campbell.

THE "Ciaran Mabach" was the illegitimate son of Sir Alexander Mac Donald of Sleat. Warrior as well as poet, he it was that, in 1661, was entrusted with the leadership of the party obtained from Sir James Mac Donald by Ian Lom to execute the warrant from the Privy Council against the murderers of Keppoch. In this task he was successful, and carried out his purpose with remarkable vigour and expedition. Some years afterwards the poet was placed in ward in Edinburgh. Though treated kindly, he longed for a sight of his native hills and glens, and gave expression to his desires in the following verses.

THOUGH soft and easy is my bed,
Magnificent my room,
I'd rather sleep in Uigni's glade,
'Mong heather in full bloom ;
Where I could rise at break of day,
With Oscar by my side,
To seek, 'mong glens and mountains grey,
The stag of dark-brown hide.

.

Oh, how I love the free-born race,
Of beauteous gait and form,
When after them, in headlong chase,
My Oscar and my Storme
Strain every nerve, and make them strain
Each nerve and sinew too,
If, in their fearful strait, they'd gain
Benard, thy corries blue.

.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

With joy he roams the mountains blue,
And valleys fair and wide,
'Mong heather bathed in pearly dew,
With his fond faithful bride.
She sees but him, him only loves,
No other fills his eyes ;
Him watches, moving as he moves,
And in his bosom lies.

They traverse each romantic glen,
Browse on each secret lea,
Make love in every cozy den,
And wander far and free :
While here I pine in hopeless ward,
Nor mark my herd of deer,
Fleeting across thy brow, Melard,
And on thy slopes career.

Oh, little do I love to trace
Edina's streets and lanes,
Or breath lip-love with courtly grace
In palaces or fanes ;
Give me the forest wide and high,
The mountain and the vale,
Where dwell the herds of piercing eye,
Whose speed outstrips the gale.

Ah, me, 'tis hard to wither here,
And smoke and fumes inhale
From dusky lanes, and vennels drear,
And gutters dark and stale ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

And bid sweet Skye of bays and dells,
Wild glens and mountains blue,
Where all I love in comfort dwells,
A long, a sad adieu.

THE NORTHERN EARL.

Murdoch Matheson (*circa* 1680).

Translation by Sir Walter Scott.

THE *Aosdan* Matheson, as the poet was familiarly called, was bard to that Earl of Seaforth, whose worth he commemorates in his poem, "The Northern Earl." In this spirited rendering Sir Walter Scott furnishes us with an imitation rather than a translation.

FAREWELL to Mackenneth, great Earl of the North,
The Lord of Lochcarron, Glenshiel, and Seaforth ;
To the Chieftain this morning his course who began,
Launching forth on the billows his bark like a swan.
For a far foreign land he has hoisted his sail :
Farewell to Mackenzie, High Chief of Kintail !

O swift be the galley, and hardy her crew,
May her captain be skilful, her mariners true,
In danger undaunted, unwearied by toil,
Though the whirlwind should rise, and the ocean should
boil ;
On the brave vessel's gunnel I drank his bonail,*
And farewell to Mackenzie, High Chief of Kintail !

* Bonail or Bonallez, the old Scottish phrase for a feast at parting with a friend.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Awake in thy chamber thou sweet southland gale,
Like the sighs of his people, breathe soft on his sail;
Be prolonged as regret, that his vassals must know,
Be fair as their faith, and sincere as their woe:
Be so soft, and so fair, and so faithful, sweet gale,
Wafting onward Mackenzie, High Chief of Kintail!

Be his pilot experienced, and trusty, and wise,
To measure the seas, and to study the skies:
May he hoist all his canvas from streamer to deck,
But O! crowd it higher when wafting him back—
Till the cliffs of Skooroora, and Conan's glad vale,
Shall welcome Mackenzie, High Chief of Kintail!

CULLODEN, AND AFTER.

John Roy Stuart, 1700-1752.

Translation from M'Lean's "Literature of the Highlands."

A DISTINGUISHED soldier, ardent Jacobite, and vigorous Gaelic poet, John Roy Stuart not only fought in the "'Forty-five," like Alexander Mac Donald, but, like him also, proclaimed his loyalty to the Stuart cause in verse of intense devotion. He was born in Kincardine, Strathspey, and after serving in the French Army with great distinction, came home and joined the Prince's army, with the rank of Colonel. He died in France.

On my heart grief is pressing
For the wounds and distress of my land;
King of Heaven still guard us
From our foes that are hard on each hand.
On our track is Duke William,
And we fall by his villainous band,
Till the vilest and basest
On the flower of our race have their stand.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

O, that bonnie Prince Charlie
By King George and his earls should be chased !
That the Right should be banished,
And the Truth thus have vanished disgraced !
But, O God, if it please Thee,
Bring the Kingdom in season to peace ;
And the true king enthroning
In time make our moaning to cease.

O, the companies plaided,
That are scattered and faded away,
Whom the Saxons, disloyal,
Have deceived and destroyed as they may !
Though they gained in the fighting
Not their valour nor their might won the field,
But the wind and the raining
That blew from the plains made us yield.

.

'Neath their feet we are trampled,
To our shame and our ample disgrace,
Our lands and our dwellings
Are wasted and felled to our face.
Castle Downie, fire-blackened,
Is a ruin all lacking in form,
O, how bitter the changes,
That have left us to range in the storm !

.

In the woods we are hiding,
In the glens and the wide hills around,
Without solace or pleasure,
Never hearing sweet measures of sound ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Food and fire are failing,
And the mist is a veil on our sight ;
Like the owl's is our calling,
That is heard at the falling of night.

THE BIORLINN OF CLAN RANALD.

(THE LAUNCHING.)

Alexander Mac Donald (Mac Mhaighster Alastair) 1701-1780.

Translation by Professor John Stuart Blackie.

ALEXANDER MAC DONALD of Ardnamurchan holds rank, undoubtedly, among the foremost of our Gaelic poets. Writers bring him before us as student in Glasgow University, teacher, farmer, captain in the Jacobite army, lexicographer, and poet. He had, indeed, a chequered career, yet was "a man of high and varied gifts." Strongly emotional and vehement, his verse is, for the most part, characterised by vigorous and copious expression, though, on occasion, he is not deficient in tenderness. In him, Jacobitism found an inspiring ally. His poems were first published in Edinburgh in 1751, and to him belongs the honour of having been the first to publish a volume of original Gaelic poems. Mac Donald should also be kindly remembered as compiler of the first Gaelic vocabulary. This he did on the suggestion of the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, and the work was published in 1741.

" God bless the good ship of Clan Ranald,
The first day it leaps on the wave,
The ship and the sailors that man it,
The first on the roll of the brave !
May the Three and the One be their guidance,
Who tempers the blasts when they bray,
Or tossed 'mid the roar of the billow,
Or lulled in the sleep of the bay !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Great Father, that gathered the waters,
Whose breath is the strength of the storm,
Bless Thou our frail bark and its men,
When the rage of the tempest is warm.
O, Son of the Father, give blessing
To anchor and rudder and mast,
To sail and to sheet and to tackle,
When they stand the rude strain of the blast.
Bless yard and halyard and stay,
All gear both above and below,
Give soundness to rigging and rope,
That no flaw and no fault they may know.
May the Spirit the Holy protect us,
Whose grace we devoutly implore,
Who hath fathomed all depths of the ocean,
And numbered all bays on the shore !

“ May God bless our weapons, well tempered
With steel of the truest from Spain,
And our mail, in a hundred fights,
That was hacked and dented in vain !
The shapely curve of the target,
The gleaming edge of the glaive,
All gear that trimly depends
From the shoulder-belt of the brave.
Our bows of the yew well seasoned,
In breast of the battle to win,
Our shafts of the birch, well-cased
In the curly badgers’ skin.
Give poignard and pistol thy blessing,
And tartan that flaps in the fray,
And all the equipment of war,
In the bark of M’Donald to-day.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Let no man be faint or soft-hearted,
Look hard in the face of the storm,
While plank may with plank hang together,
And rib to his rib shall be firm !
Though the good ship may reel and may stagger,
While a pin or a nail shall be tight,
Though the big wave be bristling around her,
Let him look and not blench at the sight.
In the stormy contention of billows,
Who stands or who wisely shall bend,
Will see the proud crest of the ocean
Lie tame at his feet in the end.
If a wife have a strife with her lord,
When her fancies are wayward and wild,
Let him budge not an inch from his word,
And she'll sit and not chide like a child.
Even so that wild huge-heaving sea,
When fretful she bristles her quills,
Will yield to the strength of a man,
As the King of the universe wills.

“ Now bring the dark boat, deftly-fashioned,
To the place of sailing ;
Take the poles, the stout, the smooth,
And push with might prevailing ;
Grasp the shapely oars, smooth-handled,
Limber oars that lightly
Sweep with venturous van across
The waters foaming brightly ;
Oars that, when they fall with might,
Upon the blue sea darkling,
Wake from its bed the sleeping light,
In liquid beauty sparkling ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Oars that with their well-poised stroke,
As the light boat dashes,
Wound the wave, the proudly swelling,
With a thousand gashes ;
Oars that with well-measured swing
Bound, all-fearless, leaping
O'er the rough crests and gaping troughs
Of dark blue depths unsleeping.

“ Come, stretch your limbs, my lusty callants,
Lift the oars and bend them,
From your firm palm, strong and sinewy,
Pith and vigour lend them.
Ye brawny boatmen, stout and stalwart,
Stretch your length, and readily
Let your hard and knotty muscles
Rise and sink full steadily,
Making the smooth and polished blades,
Whose lordship reins the ocean,
Cuff the rough crests of the fretful brine,
With a well-timed motion.

“ Come now, thou man of the first oar,
Thou king of lusty fellows,
Raise the song that makes men strong
To mount the heaving billows,
Raise the iorram that will drive,
With shouts of glee the Birlinn
Through the bristling bellowing rout
Of waters wildly whirling.
Ho ! for the waves, as they hiss and spit,
To the storm-blast ramping and roaring ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Huzza for the boat, in its plunging fit,
Where the foamy streams are pouring !
Ho ! for the blade, so limber, lithe,
When it twists the writhing billow,
Huzza for the hand where blisters burn
To each hard-pulling fellow—
Fellows with shaggy-breasted might,
And stout heart never quailing !
Though oak and iron creak and start,
And boom and spar are failing,
They, in the face of the sea, will steer
The slender craft, nor borrow
Fear from the breath of the cutting blast,
Or the gape of the salt-sea furrow.
This is the crew, o'er the waters blue,
With a kingly strength presiding,
Untired, unflagging and unspent,
On the breast of the rough wave riding ! ”

THE GARB OF THE BRAVE.

Alexander Mac Donald.

Translation by Prof. John Stuart Blackie.

I.

GIVE me the plaid, the light, the airy,
Round my shoulder, under my arm,
Rather than English wool the choicest
To keep my body tight and warm.

II.

Who is so trim as a kilted laddie ?
Tight his gear, and light his adorning,
With only a buckle his belt to fasten
When he leaps to his feet in the morning !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

III.

Thou art my joy in the charge of battle,
When bright blades are flashing before me !
When the war-pipe is sounding, sounding,
And the banners are flapping o'er me !

IV.

Good art thou in the stalking of deer,
When peaks are red with the young day dawning ;
Mild art thou with sober cheer,
When going to church on Sunday morning.

V.

I with thee would lie on the heather,
Closely wrapt to keep me warm ;
Safe within thy folds defying
Batter of rain and bray of storm.

VI.

Good is the plaid in the day or the night time,
High on the Ben, or low in the glen ;
No king was he but a coward who banned it,
Fearing the look of the plaided men !

VII.

A coward was he, not a king who did it,
Banning with statutes the garb of the brave ;
But the breast that wears the plaidie
Ne'er was a home to the heart of a slave.

VIII.

Let them tear our bleeding bosoms,
Let them drain our latest veins,
In our hearts is Charlie, Charlie,
While a spark of life remains !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

ELEGY TO A PET DOVE.

Alexander Mac Donald.

Translation by Dr. Alexander Stewart ("Nether Lochaber").

MOURNFUL my tale to tell,
Though others heed not my sigh :
My gentle, my beautiful pet dove dead—
Must the callow twins too die ?
Alas ! for the death of the gentlest dove
That ever in woodland coo'd ;
Killed by a dog whose proper foe
Were the otter that fights and dies so slow
In his cairny solitude.

Of all the birds that cleave the air
Buoyant on rapid wing,
I mourn thee most my pet dove fair—
Dear, darling thing !
Noah loved the well, my dove, full well,
When a guilty world was drowned ;
With thy message of peace thou camest to tell
Of solid ground ;
He knew the truth as the waters fell
Slowly around.

.
At first she found no spot whereon
To rest from weary flight,
And on she flew, and on and on
Till now at length she gazed upon
The mountain tops in sight ;
And the dove returned with her letter—a leaf
(Of mickle meaning, I trow, tho' brief)
Which Noah read with delight.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Not easy to rob thy nest, thou dove,
By cunning or strength of men ;
On the shelf of the beetling crag above
Was thy castle of strength, thy home of love,
Who dare come near thee then ?
Harmless and gentle ever wert thou,
Dear, darling dove !
In the ear of thy mate, with a coo and a bow,
Still whispering love !

.

No creed or paternoster thou
Didst sing or say ;
And yet thy soul is in bliss, I trow,
Be't where it may !
That now withouten coffin or shroud
In thy little grave thou dost lie,
Makes me not sad ; bnt oh ! I'm wae
At the sad death thou didst die.

THE MAVIS OF CLAN DONALD.

John Mac Codrum, 1710-1796.

Translation by Prof. John Stuart Blackie.

MAC CODRUM was Bard to Sir James Mac Donald of Sleat. He was a native of North Uist, and by Sir James was made perpetual tenant (rent free) of some of the rich machar land of that island. He was powerful as a satirist. Mac Codrum was one of those who came prominently forward in connection with the Ossianic Controversy, for he could repeat for hours together poems which seemed, to his patron, "to be the same with Macpherson's translations."

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

I.

THE mavis of Pabal am I ; in my nest
I lay long time with my head on my breast,
Dozing away the dreary hour,
In the day that was dark, and the time that was sour.

II.

But now I soar to the mountain's crest,
For the chief is returned whom I love best,
In the face of the sun, on the fringe of the wood,
Feeding myself with wealth of good.

III.

On the tip of the twigs I sit and sing,
And greet the morn on dewy wing,
And fling to the breeze my lusty note,
With no bar to my breast, and no dust in my throat.

IV.

Every bird will praise its own nest,
And why shall not I think mine the best ?
Land of strong men and healthy food,
And kindly cheer, and manners good.

V.

A land that faces the ocean wild,
But with summer sweetness, mellow and mild,
Calves, lambs, and kids, full many a score,
Bread, milk, and honey piled in the store.

VI.

A dappled land full sunny and warm,
Secure and sheltered from the storm,
With ducks and geese and ponds not scantied,
And food for all who live to want it

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

VII.

A land of oats and bearded barley,
And fields where grass is waving fairly ;
Green knolls with yellow sheaves are there,
And snow is shy, and frost is rare.

VIII.

With smiling machars by the sea,
Where marigolds and daisies be,
Bulls, cows, and mares, and stallions stout,
A breed that dies not lightly out.

IX.

A land in all right fair to view,
With well-girt lads of healthy hue ;
Moors peopled far with hornèd kine,
And kelp with gold to fringe the brine.

X.

At fair Cladh Chothan I greeted the light,
And Unnair bred me in the ways that are right,
In view of the waves of the trenchèd tide,
Where they toss their crests in playful pride.

XI.

The brave Clan Donald I name for mine,
With sail and streamer that rides the brine,
That cuts the foam with steady keel,
And firmly handles the hard grey steel.

XII.

Men they were of might and mettle,
Wise in peace and keen in battle ;
Not faint of heart, but ready with glee,
To chase or to stand, as the need may be.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

XIII.

Men that were made of no yielding stuff,
That could scowl like the storm when the strife was
rough,
'Neath the flap of the banner who drew the bright
sword,
Or flung the bright jest round the banqueting-board.

XIV.

And the slogan of war was their song of delight,
Whose face ever looked to the front of the fight ;
Strong were their strokes and hard were their blows,
When in tatters they tore the red coats of their foes.

XV.

O they were manful and mighty of mood,
Nor shrunk, like a woman, from tasting of blood ;
They were modest and gentle, but bold in the fray,
And though to command, they were prompt to obey.

XVI.

They were lofty in spirit, and noble in mien ;
A statelier race never trod on green,
And they showed to the foe not the face of a child,
In the breast of the storm when the war-cry was wild.

XVII.

Then sit round the board, boys, steady and stout,
Take firm grasp of your cups, and drain them all out,
Here's a health to Sir James, and across the blue wave
Be his guidance from God, who is mighty to save !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

THE CUCKOO ON THE TREE.

(CUACHAG NAN CRAOBH.)

Alexander Mac Donald. Died *circa* 1725.

Translation by Thomas Pattison.

THIS tender poem has usually been attributed to William Ross, and it is strictly in keeping with his characteristic work. Recent discoveries, however, point to its being the production of Alexander Mac Donald, younger of Dalness and Glencoe.

SMALL bird on that tree, hast thou pity for me,
Out through this mild misty gloaming ?
Would I were now 'neath the dusk of the bough,
All alone with my true love roaming ;
I would raise up a bield, her fair form to shield
From the chill moory tempest blowing ;
And rest by her side in my fondness and pride,
And kiss her young lips sweet and glowing.

I slept late and dreamed, but 'twas no lie that gleamed
On my mind—Oh ! so sad and despairing—
When a husband I spied with his beautiful bride
Affection's pure transports sharing ;
How my old love returned and cold reason it spurned,
Till I moaned and wept, wildly crying ;
Every pulse, every vein, boiling—bounding amain—
With the blood from my heart quickly flying !

Yes—I'm pledged to her still in spite of my will ;
Alas ! and I'm wounded badly ;
But a look's all I lack of her face to bring back
The health I have lost so sadly :

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Then I'd rise without fail, and her would I hail,
Light with joy and not thus, sorrow laden ;
She's my own tender dove—my delight and my love—
The sun over every maiden.

Yet nought to me but a sting all her bright beauties
bring—

I droop with decay, and I languish :
There's a pain at my heart like a pitiless dart,
And I waste all away with anguish.
She has stolen the hue on my young cheeks that grew,
And much she has caused my sorrow ;
Unless now she renew with her kindness that hue,
Death will soon bid me " Good morrow ! "

The curl of her hair was so graceful and fair,
Its lid for her eye a sweet warden ;
Her cheek it was bright and her breast limy white,
And her breath like the breeze o'er a garden.
Till they lay down my head in its stone-guarded bed
The force of these charms I feel daily,
While I think of the mirth in the woods that had birth,
When she laughed and sported gaily.

Her mouth was so sweet, and her teeth white and neat ;
Her eyes like the sloe-berry shining :
How well will she wear, with her matronly air,
The kerchief where nobles are dining !
Oh ! if she could feel the like ardour and zeal
Which so long in my breast have been glowing ;
And if she were mine, with the blessing divine,
I might turn from the way I am going.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Softly, some day, will they make in the clay
My bed since her coldness so tries me ;
I've wanted her long, and my love has been strong,
And the greenwood bough still denies me.
If she were thus low, with what haste should I go
To ask how the maiden was faring :
Now short the delay till a mournful array
The brink of my grave will be bearing !

THE SHIELING SONG.

Robert Mac Kay ("Rob Donn"), 1714-1778.

Translation by Thomas Pattison.

ROB DONN, the brown-haired Bard of Reay, was born at Allt-na-Caillich, Strathmore, Sutherlandshire. Like his contemporary, Donnacha Bàn, he was wholly illiterate, and could neither read nor write. Nevertheless he began to lisp in numbers at a very early age, and while yet a young man gave evidence of power as a satirist. His precocity early attracted attention, and in his poetical efforts he received considerable encouragement from ministers and other men of culture. Though not occupying a place with Alexander Mac Donald and Duncan Mac Intyre in the foremost rank of Gaelic singers, the Herdsman of Reay had in his day great influence among the men of his class, and his poems continue to be highly esteemed by his countrymen. They were first published in the year 1829, and they had the honour of being reviewed by Lockhart in the *Quarterly* of July 1831.

Oh ! sad is the shieling,
And gone are its joys !
All harsh and unfeeling
To me now its noise,
Since Anna—who warbled
As sweet as a merle—

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Forsook me—my honey-mouth'd,
Merry-lipped girl !
Heich ! how I sigh :
While the hour
Lazily, lonelily,
Sadly, goes by !

Last week, as I wandered
Up past the old trees,
I mourn'd, while I ponder'd,
What changes one sees !
Just then the fair stranger
Walk'd by with my dear—
Dreaming, unthinking,
I had wander'd too near,
Till "Heich !" then I cried—
When I saw
The girl, with her lover, draw
Close to my side—

"Anna, the yellow-hair'd,
Dost thou not see
How thy love unimpair'd
Wearieth me ?
'Twas as strong in my absence,
When banish'd from thee—
As heart-stirring, powerful,
Deep as you see—
Heich ! it is now,
At this time,
When up like a leafy bough,
High doth it climb."

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Then, haughtily speaking,
She airily said,
" 'Tis in vain for you seeking
To hold up your head :
There were six wooers sought me
While you were away ;
And the absentee surely
Deserved less than they.
Ha ! ha ! ha !
Are you ill ?
But if Love seeks to kill you—bah !
Small is his skill ! ”

Ach ! ach ! Now I'm trying
My loss to forget—
With sorrow and sighing,
With anger and fret.
But still that sweet image
Steals over my heart ;
And still I deem fondly
Hope need not depart.
Heich ! and I say
That our love,
Firm as a tower grey,
Nought can remove.

So Fancy beguiles me,
And fills me with glee,
But the carpenter wiles thee,
False speaker ! from me.
Yet from Love's first affection
I never get free ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

But the dear known direction
My thoughts ever flee.
Heich ! when we stray'd
Far away,
Where soft shone the summer day
Through the green shade.

DEATH.

Robert Mac Kay.

Translation by Lachlan Mac Bean.

O DEATH, thou art still a herald of ill,
Thy grasp, hard and chill, ne'er faileth ;
Where warriors fight thou showest thy might,
To shun thee no flight availeth.
O messenger drear, no pity or fear
Saves peasant or peer before thee ;
For gold and for gain thou hast but disdain,
And victims in vain implore thee.

The babe at its birth, ere sorrow or mirth
It knows upon earth, thou takest ;
For the maid to be wed, ere to church she is led,
An eerisome bed thou makest.
If old or if young, if feeble or strong,
In wisdom or wrong and error ;
If small or if great, whatever our state,
We have the same fate of terror.

O Power, from whom our sorrowful doom
Of death and the tomb descendeth,
How happy is he whose confident plea
On Thy promises free dependeth !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Our Father thou art, the widow's sure part,
Ne'er shall Thy support forsake her ;
All good is bestowed, all favour is showed,
By our bountiful God and Maker.

THE CONTEMPLATION OF A SKULL.

Dugald Buchanan, 1716-1768.

Translation by Prof. John Stuart Blackie.

DUGALD BUCHANAN, schoolmaster, catechist, and preacher, was a native of Balquhiddy, Perthshire. From the cast of his mind and his religious experiences he has been likened to the Bedford tinker, and the poet Cowper. His verse concerns itself largely with religious subjects, and as a writer of Hymns "his countrymen have not been backward to assign to Buchanan one of the most notable niches in their poetical Pantheon."

I SAT all alone
By a cold grey stone,
And behold a skull lay on the ground !
I took in my hand,
And pitiful scanned
Its ruin all round and round.

.

In thy cheek is no red,
Smooth and cold is thy head,
Deaf thine ear when sweet music is nigh ;
In thy nostril no breath,
And the savour of death
In dark hollow where beamed the bright eye.

.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

From that blank look of thine
I gather no sign
Of thy life-tale, its shame or its glory ;
Proud Philip's great son
And his slave are as one,
When a skull is the sum of their story.

.

A maiden wert thou,
Of bright eye and fair brow,
And a witchcraft of smiles in thy face ?
And was thine the fine art
To enmesh the weak heart
Of each youth that might sigh for thy grace ?

And what art thou now,
With no grace on thy brow,
And thy witchery turned to disgust ?
Cry shame on black Death
That stopped thy fair breath,
And trampled thy bloom in the dust !

Or a lawyer wert thou,
Wise and true to thy vow,
To hold all offenders in awe,
Without favour or grudge,
To weigh and to judge,
And to keep the straight line of the law ?

Or wert thou a knave,
A tool and a slave
To the rich who could buy thee with gold,
But no virtue couldst see
In the poor man's plea,
And left him to starve in the cold ?

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Or wert thou a leech,
Keen to know and to teach
All the pharmacy tabled in science,
With a balm in thy hand
For each plague in the land,
Bidding death and disease defiance?

But alack for the man
That so bravely could plan,
From disease and distemper to save;
In vain all his skill,
With potion and pill,
To respite himself from the grave!

Or a soldier wert thou,
With storm on thy brow,
On the sword of thy vengeance relying,
Careering with power,
In victory's hour,
O'er heaps of the dead and the dying?

.
No whit care the worms
For the strong man of arms,
On his brain they will banquet full well;
And the skull of the bold
Is a garrison hold
For the black-mantled beetle to dwell.

.
Or wert thou a man,
The chief of thy clan,
The broad-acred lord of the soil,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

A help still at hand
To the good in the land,
But a rod and reproof to the vile?

Or was it thy plan
A hard-faced man,
Thy people to grind and to flay,
To exact to the letter
Thy right from thy debtor,
While Mercy cried out for delay?

.

Or wert thou a teacher
Of truth, and a preacher,
With message of mercy to tell,
With an arm swift and strong
To pull back the throng,
That headlong were plunging to hell?

Or wert thou a man
Of the moderate clan,
To shepherd the sheep at thy leisure?
If the fleece were but thine
Old Reynard might dine
On the lambs of the flock at his pleasure.

.

Or wert thou a wight,
That strove for the right,
With God for thy guide in thy doing?
Though now thou lie there,
All bleached and bare,
In the blast a desolate ruin,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

From the tomb thou shalt rise
And mount to the skies,
When the trump of the Judgment shall bray ;
Thy body of sin
Thou shalt slip like a skin,
And cast all corruption away.

.
He shall greet thee His own,
From the light of the throne,
Whence joyfulness flows like a river ;
Thou shalt bloom in His sight,
Without blast, without blight,
In an Eden of glory for ever.

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

(Extracts).

Dugald Buchanan.

(1) CHRIST COMING TO JUDGMENT.

Translation by Dr. Nigel Mac Neill.

THEN like the morn enkindling red,
A glowing spreads throughout the skies
Where Jesus comes, a glare is shed
By Heaven's burning tapestries.

The clouds all suddenly unfold
To make for the High King a door,
And we the Mighty Judge behold,
Whose glory streams forth evermore.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

The rainbow glows around His form,
His voice resounds like mountain floods ;
Out-flashing o'er the sullen storm,
His lightning eye pours from the clouds.

The sun, great lustre of the skies,
Before His glorious Person pales ;
At length her failing brightness dies
Before the light His face unveils.

Her robes of gloom she will uptake,
The blood-red moon drops down in space,
The mighty heavenly powers shall shake,
Out-casting planets from their place.

Like tempest-shaken fruit on trees,
So shall they tremble in the skies !
Like heavy rain-drops on the breeze,
Their glory like a dead man's eyes.

(2) DESPAIR.

Translation by Lachlan Macbean.

OH ! canst Thou cast me from Thy face
Where Thou shalt never hear me cry ?
Is there in Hell so dark a place
As hide me from Thy piercing eye ?

Canst Thou in blessedness complete
Hear Thy poor creature's mournful tones—
Father, have pity, ease the heat
That boils the marrow in my bones !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Hear, O my God, my wretched prayer,
And hear the groans that tear my breast,
And for the sins I have to bear
Grant me, O Lord, this sole request—

When I shall weep in flaming fire
Until ten thousand years go by,
Till even torturing demons tire,
Grant then, O Lord, that I may die !

THE DREAM.

(Extract.)

Translation by Lachlan Macbean.

NONE free from trouble wilt thou find
Among the millions of mankind ;
The monarch has as many sighs
As has the slave that lowest lies.

Each brand its share of smoke must bear ;
Each good must have of ill a share ;
For roses grow on thorny trees,
And honey comes from stinging bees.

.
He whom the world serves best has got
A crook of some kind in his lot,
Which all his striving and his skill
Can ne'er make straight—'tis crooked still.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

THE BRAVE CHISHOLM.

Christiana Ferguson (*circa* 1746).

Translation by Prof. J. Stuart Blackie.

OUR poetess, who so affectionately and chastely laments the death of her husband in these touching lines, was a native of the parish of Contin, Ross-shire. William Chisholm was closely related to his chief, and on the memorable day of Culloden he was banner-man of his clan. How bravely he defended his charge until he was shot down, with seven bullets in his body, may be read in the records of that disastrous fight.

“ O CHARLIE, brave young Stuart,
From thee came my heart's sore bleeding !
All my best, my all I gave thee
In the battle for thy speeding.
Not for sheep, and not for cattle
Now I give my tears not sparely ;
Who was all the world to me,
Him I gave to die for Charlie.

“ Who will draw the sword for Charlie ?
Who will fill his chair to-morrow ?
Little cares me now to ask—
Pining here in widowed sorrow.
And yet, and yet, I may not blame thee,
Though by thee I'm ruined fairly.
Though by thee my lord lies bleeding,
Thou art still my king, my Charlie !

“ O waly, waly woe, my sorrow,
Would the truth might be a lie now !
Far from me be mirth and joy
When thou in death dost lowly lie now !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Who will show another like thee,
Brain and brawn well joined together?
No red blood from veins more loyal
At Culloden stained the heather.

“ Many a silken-vested lady,
Titled dames, and dainty misses,
Envied me the right to claim,
As a wife may claim, thy kisses.
All the wealth of Guinea mines
Might not make me to disclaim thee ;
I'd sooner break all God's commands
Than say Amen ! to who should blame thee !

“ Woe's me ! Woe that I must drag
Days and nights in groans and moaning ;
Weary, weary, wakeful nights,
With no hope for thy returning !
Never more shall fife or fiddle
Rouse my love where he is sleeping,
Never more his dear voice whisper
Kindly words to stay my weeping.

“ When he left me I was hoping—
Hoping nightly, hoping daily—
He would come back from the battle
With his banner floating gaily.
But the time is past for hoping ;
I shall see thee never, never ;
'Neath the turf my hopes I bury
With my dear heart's love for ever.

“ There's many a widow weeping sore
From Trotternish to Sleat in Skye now ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

But never widow wept a lord
So worthy of hot tears as I now.
When he was here, how bright my life !
How dim, how dark, with him departed !
No sorriest wight would envy me
In Skye this day so dreary-hearted !”

BEN DORAIN.

Duncan Mac Intyre (Donnachadh Bàn), 1724-1812.

Translation by Prof. John Stuart Blackie.

“DUNCAN OF THE SONGS,” as the hunter-bard of Glenorchy is affectionately called by his fellow-countrymen, occupies a foremost place in the ranks of Gaelic singers. Unlike Alexander Mac Donald, he could neither read nor write, but his power of observation and of sympathetically interpreting Nature in all her moods is unmatched among Highland Bards. A genuine son of the mountains, and a lover of the great hills, among which he spent the larger part of his life as a forester, he has, in his principal poems, shown remarkable descriptive power, combined with melodious expression, and often with a deep tenderness for the shy creatures which were his constant care. “I shall be surprised to learn,” says Prof. Blackie, “that there exists in any language, ancient or modern, a more original poem of the genus which we may call venatorial than the Ben Dorain of Duncan Ban.” The three extracts given below from this lengthy poem will afford the reader a good idea of its character.

(1) MORNING ON BEN DORAIN.

My delight it was to rise
With the early morning skies,
All aglow,
And to brush the dewy height
Where the deer in airy state
Wont to go ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

At least a hundred brace
Of the lofty-antlered race,
When they left their sleeping-place,
 Light and gay ;
When they stood in trim array,
And with low deep-breasted cry,
Flung their breath into the sky,
 From the brae :
When the hind, the pretty fool,
Would be rolling in the pool
 At her will ;
Or the stag in gallant pride,
Would be strutting at the side
Of his haughty-headed bride,
 On the hill.
And sweeter to my ear
Is the concert of the deer
 In their roaring,
Than when Erin from her lyre
Warmest strains of Celtic fire
 May be pouring ;
And no organ sends a roll
So delightful to my soul,
As the branchy-crested race,
When they quicken their proud pace
And bellow in the face
 Of Ben Dorain.
O what joy to view the stag
When he rises 'neath the crag,
And from depth of hollow chest
Sends his bell across the waste,
While he tosses high his crest
 Proudly scorning.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

And from milder throat the hind,
Lows an answer to his mind,
With the younglings of her kind

In the morning ;

With her vivid swelling eye,
While her antlered lord is nigh,
She sweeps both earth and sky,

Far away ;

And beneath her eyebrow grey
Lifts her lid to greet the day,
And to guide her turfy way

O'er the brae.

O how lightsome is her tread,
When she gaily goes ahead
O'er the green and mossy bed

Of the rills ;

When she leaps with such a grace
You will own her pretty pace
Ne'er was hindmost in the race,

When she wills ;

Or when with sudden start
She defies the hunter's art,
And is vanished like a dart

O'er the hills !

And her food full well she knows,
In the forest where she goes,
Where the rough old pasture grows

To her mind.

Stiff grass of virtue rare,
Glossy fatness to prepare,
'Neath her coat of shining hair,

To the hind ;

And for drink she hath the well,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Where the water-cresses dwell,
Far sweeter to her taste,
In the freshness of the waste,
 Than sweet wine ;
The blushing daisy-tips
Are a dainty to her lips,
As the nodding grass she clips,
 Very fine ;
St. John's wort too she knows,
And where the sweet primrose
And the spotted orchis grow,
 She will dine.
With such food and drink, I ween,
You will never find them lean,
But girt with pith and power,
To stand stoutly in the hour
 Of distress ;
And though laden on the back
With weighty fat no lack,
With well-compacted limb
They will wear it light and trim,
 Like a dress.
O how pleasant 'twas to see
How happy they would be,
When they gathered all together
To their home upon the heather
 In the gloaming !
At the bottom of the hill
They were safe from touch of ill,
In their nook of shelter tight,
When they rested for the night
 From their roaming.
What though the nights were long,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

And the winds were sharp and strong
In their roaring,
Wrapt in thick fur of the red,
Where the moor is widely spread,
Here they made their turfy bed,
And their sleep was sweet and sound,
With no wish beyond the bound
Of Ben Dorain.

(2) THE GATHERING OF THE DEER ; AND THE MOUNTAIN BURN.

RIGHT pleasant was the view
Of that fleet, red-mantled crew,
As with sounding hoof they trod
O'er the green and turfy sod
Up the brae,
As they sped with lightsome hurry
Through the rock-engirdled corrie,
With no lack of food, I ween,
When they cropped the banquet green
All the way.
O grandly did they gather,
In a jocund troop together,
In the corrie of the Fern
With light-hearted unconcern ;
Or by the smooth green loan
Of Achalader were shown,
Or by the ruined station
Of the old heroic nation
Of the Fin,
Or by the willow rock
Or the witch-tree on the knock,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

The branchy-crested flock
Might be seen.
Nor will they stint the measure
Of their frolic and their pleasure
And their play,
When with airy-footed amble
At their freakish will they ramble
O'er the brae,
With their prancing and their dancing,
And their ramping and their stamping,
And their flashing and their washing
In the pools,
Like lovers newly wedded,
Light-hearted, giddy-headed
Little fools.
No thirst have they beside
The mill-brook's flowing tide
And the pure well's lucid pride
Honey-sweet ;
A spring of lively cheer,
Sparkling cool and clear,
And filtered through the sand
At their feet ;
'Tis a life-restoring flood
To repair the wasted blood,
The cheapest and the best in all the land,
And vainly gold will try
For the Queen's own lips to buy
Such a treat.
From the rim it trickles down
Of the mountain's granite crown
Clear and cool ;
Keen and eager though it go

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Through your veins with lively flow,
Yet it knoweth not to reign
In the chambers of the brain
With misrule ;

Where dark water-cresses grow
You will trace its quiet flow,
With mossy border yellow,
So mild and soft and mellow,
In its pouring.

With no slimy dregs to trouble
The brightness of its bubble
As it threads its silver way
From the granite shoulders gray
Of Ben Dorain.

Then down the sloping side
It will slip with glassy slide
Gently welling,
Till it gather strength to leap,
With a light and foamy sweep,
To the corrie broad and deep
Proudly swelling ;

Then bends amid the boulders
'Neath the shadow of the shoulders
Of the Ben,

Through a country rough and shaggy,
So jaggy and so knaggy,
Full of hummocks and of hunches,
Full of stumps and tufts and bunches,
Full of bushes and of rushes,
In the glen,

Through rich green solitudes,
And wildly hanging woods
With blossom and with bell,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

In rich redundant swell,
And the pride
Of the mountain daisy there,
And the forest everywhere,
With the dress and with the air
Of a bride.

(3) THE HAUNT OF THE DEER.

Translation by Prof. John Campbell Shairp.

HARK, that quick-darting snort !
'Tis the light-headed hind,
With sharp-pointed nostril
Keen searching the wind :
Conceited, slim-limbed,
The high summit she keeps,
Nor, for fear of the gun-fire,
Descends from the steeps.
Though she gallop at speed
Her breath will not fail,
For she comes of a breed
Were strong-winded and hale.

When she lifteth her voice,
What joy 'tis to hear
The ghost of her breath,
As it echoeth clear.
For she calleth aloud,
From the cliff of the crag,
Her silver-hipped lover,
The proud-antlered stag.
Well-antlered, high-headed,
Loud-voiced doth he come,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

From the haunts he well knows
Of Ben Dorain his home.

Ah, mighty Ben Dorain !
How hard 'twere to tell
How many proud stags
In thy fastnesses dwell.
How many thy slim hinds,
Their wee calves attending,
And, with white-twinkling tails,
Up the Balloch ascending,
To where Corrie-Chreetar
Its bield is extending.

But when the mood takes her
To gallop with speed,
With her tender hoof-tips
Scarce touching the mead,
As she stretcheth away
In her fleet-flying might,
What men in the kingdom
Could follow her flight ?
Full of gambol and gladness,
Blithe wanderers free,
No shadow of sadness
Ever comes o'er their glee
But fitful and tricky,
Slim and agile of limb,
Age will not burden them,
Sorrow not dim.

How gay through the glens
Of the sweet mountain grass,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Loud sounding, all free
From complaining they pass.
Though the snow come, they'll ask
For no roof-tree to bield them ;
The deep Corrie Altrum,
His rampart will shield them.
There the rifts and the clefts
And deep hollows they'll be in,
With their well-sheltered beds
Down in lone Aisan-teean.

THE MISTY CORRIE.

(COIRE CHEATHAICH.)

Translation by Robert Buchanan.

My beauteous corri ! where cattle wander—
My misty corri ! my darling dell !
Mighty, verdant, and covered over
With wild flowers tender of sweetest smell ;
Dark is the green of thy grassy clothing,
Soft swell thy hillocks most green and deep,
The cannach blowing, the darnel growing,
While the deer troop past to the misty steep.

Fine for wear is thy beauteous mantle,
Strongly woven and ever new,
With rough grass o'er it, and, brightly gleaming,
The grass all spangled with diamond dew ;
It's round my corri, my lovely corri,
Where rushes thicken and long reeds blow ;
Fine were the harvest to any reaper
Who through the marsh and the bog could go.

.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Around Ruadh Arisidh what ringlets cluster ;
Fair, long, and crested, and closely twined,
This way and that they are lightly waving,
At every breath of the mountain wind.
The twisted hemlock, the slanted rye-grass,
The juicy moor-grass, can all be found ;
And the close-set groundsel is greenly growing
By the wood where heroes are sleeping sound.

In yonder ruin once dwelt MacBhaidi,
'Tis now a desert where winds are shrill ;
Yet the well-shaped brown ox is feeding by it,
Among the stones that bestrew the hill.
And fine to see, both in light and gloaming,
The smooth Clach-Fionn, so still and deep,
And the houseless cattle and calves most peaceful,
Grouped on the brow of the lonely steep.

Out of the ocean comes the salmon,
Steering with crooked nose he hies,
Hither he darts where the waves are boiling—
Out he springs at the glistening flies !
How he leaps in the whirling eddies !
With back blue-black, and fins that shine,
Spangled with silver, and speckled over,
With white tail tipping his frame so fine.

Gladsome and grand is the misty corri,
And there the hunter hath noble cheer ;
The powder blazes ; the black lead rattles
Into the heart of the dun-brown deer ;
And there the hunter's hound so bloody
Around the hunter doth leap and play,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

And madly rushing, most fierce and fearless
Springs at the throat of the stricken prey.

Oh ! 'twas gladsome to go a-hunting,
Out in the dew of the sunny morn ;
For the great red stag was never wanting,
Nor the fawn nor the doe with never a horn.
And when rain fell, and the night was coming,
From the open heath we could swiftly fly,
And, finding the shelter of some deep grotto,
Couch at ease till the night went by.

And sweet it was, when the white sun glimmered,
Listening under the crag to stand,
And hear the moor-hen so hoarsely croaking,
And the red-cock murmuring close at hand ;
While the little wren blew his tiny trumpet,
And threw his steam off blithe and strong,
While the speckled thrush and the red-breast gaily
Lilted together a pleasant song !

Not a singer but joined the chorus,
Not a bird in the leaves was still,
First the laverock, that famous singer,
Led the music with throat so shrill,
From tall tree-branches the blackbird whistled,
And the gray-bird joined with his sweet " coo-coo " ;
Everywhere was the blithesome chorus,
Till the glen was murmuring through and through.

Then out of the shelter of every corrie
Came forth the creature whose home is there :
First proudly stepping, with branching antlers,
The snorting red-deer forsook his lair ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Through the sparkling fen he rushed rejoicing,
Or gently played by his heart's delight—
The hind of the mountain, the sweet brown princess,
So fine, so dainty, so staid, so slight.

Under the light-green branches creeping,
The brown doe cropt the leaves unseen,
While the proud buck gravely stared around him,
And stamped his feet on his couch of green ;
Smooth and speckled, with soft pink nostrils,
With beauteous head lay the tiny kid ;
All apart in the dewy rushes,
Sleeping unseen in its nest 'twas hid.

My beauteous corri ! my misty corri !
What light feet trod thee in joy and pride,
What strong hands gathered thy precious treasures,
What great hearts leapt on thy craggy side !
Soft and round was the nest they plundered,
Where the brindled bee his honey hath—
The speckled bee that flies, softly humming,
From flower to flower of the lonely strath.

There, thin-skin'd, smooth, in clustering bunches,
With sweetest kernels as white as cream,
From branches green the sweet juice drawing,
The nuts were growing beside the stream—
And the stream went dancing merrily onward,
And the ripe red rowan was on its brim,
And gently there in the wind of morning
The new-leaved sapling waved soft and slim.

And all around the lonely corri
The wild birds sat on their nests so neat,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

In deep warm nooks and tufts of heather,
Sheltered by knolls from the wind and sleet ;
And there from their beds in the dew of the morning,
Uprose the doe and the stag of ten,
And the tall cliffs gleamed, and the morning reddened
The Coire Cheathaich—the Misty Glen !

THE LAST ADIEU TO THE HILLS.

Duncan Mac Intyre.

Translation by Robert Buchanan.

YESTREEN I stood on Ben Dorain, and paced its dark-
grey path,
Was there a hill I did not know—a glen or grassy
strath ?
Oh ! gladly in the times of old I trod that glorious
ground,
And the white dawn melted in the sun, and the red-
deer cried around.

How finely swept the noble deer across the morning
hill,
While fearless played the fawn and doe beside the
running rill ;
I heard the black and red cock crow, and the bellowing
of the deer—
I think those are the sweetest sounds that man at
dawn may hear.

Oh ! wildly, as the bright day gleamed, I climbed the
mountain's breast,
And when I to my home returned, the sun was in the
west ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

'Twas health and strength, 'twas life and joy, to wander
freely there,
To drink at the fresh mountain stream, to breathe the
mountain air.

And oft I'd shelter for a time within some shieling
low,
And gladly sport in woman's smile, and woman's kind-
ness know.
Ah! 'twas not likely one could feel for long a joy so
gay!
The hour of parting came full soon—I sighed and went
away.

And now the cankered withering wind has struck my
limbs at last;
My teeth are rotten and decayed, my sight is failing
fast;
If hither now the chase should come, 'tis little I could
do;
Though I were hungering for food, I could not now
pursue.

.

Yestreen I wandered in the glen; what thoughts were
in my head!
There had I walked with friends of yore—where are
those dear ones fled?
I looked and looked; where'er I looked was naught
but sheep! sheep! sheep!
A woeful change was in the hill! World, thy deceit
was deep!

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

From side to side I turned mine eyes—Alas ! my soul
was sore—

The mountain bloom, the forest's pride, the old men
were no more.

Nay, not one antlered stag was there, nor doe so soft
and slight,

No bird to fill the hunter's bag—all, all were fled from
sight !

Farewell, ye forests of the heath ! hills where the
bright day gleams !

Farewell, ye grassy dells ! farewell, ye springs and
leaping streams !

Farewell, ye mighty solitudes, where once I loved to
dwell—

Scenes of my spring-time and its joys—for ever fare
you well !

THE HIGHLAND MAID.

William Ross, 1732-1790.

Translation from "Wilson's Poets and Poetry of Scotland."

THE author of "The Highland Maid," says Pattison, "is a graceful poet, perhaps the most polished of any of the Highland Minstrels, although he is certainly inferior to more than one of them in point of strength and energy." Ross was born at Broadford, and educated at Forres. A good Gaelic scholar, he was also proficient in Latin and Greek, and was regarded as a successful teacher at Gairloch, Ross-shire, where he held the office of parish schoolmaster.

LET the maids of the Lowlands
Vaunt their silks and their hollands,
In the garb of the Highlands
O give me my dear !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Such a figure for grace !
For the loves such a face !
And for lightness the pace
That the grass shall not stir.

.
When *Beltane* is over,
And summer joys hover,
With thee a glad rover
I'll wander along,
Where the harp-strings of nature
Are strung by each creature,
And the sleep shall be sweeter
That is wooed by their song.

There, bounding together,
On the grass and the heather,
And free from the tether,
The heifers shall throng.

There shall pasture at will
Ewes and goats on the hill,
While the kids, never still,
Join in madness of play.

They shall butt, they shall fight,
They shall simulate flight,
They shall break with delight
O'er the mountains away.

And there shall my Mary
With her faithful one tarry,
And never be weary
In the hollows to stray.

.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Strains the mavis his throat,
Lends the cuckoo her note,
And the world is forgot
By the side of the hill.

THE LAST LAY OF LOVE.

William Ross.

Translation from "Wilson's Poets and Poetry of Scotland."

REFT the charm of the social shell
By the touch of the sorrowful mood ;
And already the worm, in her cell,
Is preparing the birth of her brood.

She blanches the hue of my cheek,
And exposes my desperate love ;
Nor needs it that death should bespeak
The hurt no remeid can remove.

.

For me, a poor warrior, in blood
By thy arrow shot steeped, I am prone,
The glow of ambition subdued,
The weapons of rivalry gone.

.

And now it is over—the heart
That bounded, the hearing that thrilled,
In the song-fight shall never take part,
And weakness gives warning to yield.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

As the discord that waves 'neath the cloud,
That is raised by the dash of the spray
When waters are battling aloud,
Bewilderment bears me away.

And to measure the song in its charm,
Or to handle the viol with skill,
Or beauty with carols to warm,
Gone for ever, the power and the will.

No never, no never, ascend
To the mountain-pass glories shall I,
In the cheer of the chase to unbend ;
Enough, it is left but to die.

And yet, shall I go to my rest,
Where the dead of my brothers repair—
To the hall of the bards not unblest,
That their worthies before me are there?

THE MAVIS OF THE CLAN.

Ewen Mac Lachlan, 1775-1822.

Translation from "Wilson's Poets and Poetry of Scotland."

THIS distinguished native of Lochaber was a "poet and philologist of no mean order." He was an accomplished scholar, more particularly in classics, and for several years was Rector of the Grammar School of Old Aberdeen, and assistant librarian at King's College. At the time of his death he was engaged in the compilation of the Gaelic-English part of the Highland Society Dictionary. He was, indeed, as he describes himself, "Clan Lachlan's tuneful mavis."

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

CLAN LACHLAN's tuneful mavis, I sing on the branches
early,

And such my love of song, I sleep but half the night-
tide rarely ;

No raven I, of greedy maw, no kite of bloody beak,
No bird of devastating claw, but a woodland songster
meek.

I love the apple's infant bloom, my ancestry have fared
For ages on the nourishment the orchard hath prepared.
Their hey-day was the summer, their joy the summer's
dawn,

And their dancing-floor it was the green leaf's velvet
lawn,

Their song it was the carol that defiance bade to care,
And their breath of life it was the summer's balmiest
air.

.

The sun is on his flashing march, his golden hair abroad,
It seems as on the mountain-side of beams a furnace
glowed.

Now melts the honey from all flowers, and now a dew
o'erspreads

(A dew of fragrant blessedness) all the grasses of the
meads.

Nor least in my remembrance is my country's flowering
heather,

Whose russet crest nor cold, nor sun, nor sweep of
gale may wither ;

Dear to my eye the symbol wild, that loves like me,
the side

Of my own Highland mountains, that I climb in love
and pride.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Dear tribes of nature ! co-mates ye of nature's wander-
ing son—

I hail the lambs that on the floor of milky pastures
run ;

I hail the mother flocks, that, wrapp'd in warm and
sheltering fleece,

Defy the landward tempests' roar, defy the sea-ward
breeze.

The streams they drink are waters of the ever-gushing
well,

Those streams, oh, how they wind around the swellings
of the dell !

The flowers they browse are mantles spread o'er
pastures wide and far,

As mantle o'er the firmament the stars, each flower a
star !

I will not name each sister beam, but clustering there
I see

The beauty of the purple-bell—the daisy of the lea.

.

MAC CRIMMON'S LAMENT.

Dr. Norman MacLeod, 1783-1862.

Translation by Professor John Stuart Blackie.

ROUND Coolin's peak the mist is sailing,
The banshee croons her note of wailing,
Mild blue eyne with sorrow are streaming
For him that shall never return, Mac Crimmon.

The breeze on the brae is mournfully blowing !
The brook in the hollow is plaintively flowing,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

The warblers, the soul of the groves, are moaning,
For Mac Crimmon that's gone, with no hope of
returning!

The tearful clouds the stars are veiling,
The sails are spread, but the boat is not sailing,
The waves of the sea are moaning and mourning
For Mac Crimmon that's gone, to find no returning!

No more on the hill at the festal meeting,
The pipe shall sound with echo repeating,
And lads and lasses change mirth to mourning
For him that is gone, to know no returning!

No more, no more, no more for ever,
In war or in peace, shall return Mac Crimmon;
No more, no more, no more for ever,
Shall love or gold bring back Mac Crimmon.

THE NEW MAN AND THE OLD.

John Morrison, 1790-1852.

Translation by Dr. Nigel Mac Neill.

THE poetic blacksmith of Rodel, Harris, holds a high place among the hymn-writers of the Highlands. His subjects are treated with much originality, and felicity of expression. In 1828 Morrison began his career as catechist, which only terminated with his death.

THE New man in my bosom reigneth
Where still his ground the old maintaineth,
O that the Old were mine no longer
And that the New were dearer, stronger.

.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

The Old man's power has depraved me
And by Satan's help enslaved me ;
But the New has kindly sought me,
And salvation free has brought me,
 In the dust the Old man soiled me,
 The New has washed from him that foiled me.

When first the New my state regarded
He found asleep the Old unguarded ;
And when the New with power hailed him,
Then all at once the Rogue assailed him,
 When by his spear the New unveiled him,
 The Old man fiercely armed and mailed him.

The struggle started dark and raging,
Keen lances drawn were fast engaging ;
The Old received a fatal crushing,
Through which his life-blood has been gushing ;
 The Old lies wounded and inglorious,
 The New stands over him victorious.

Since then no harmony can bind them,
In discord dire you ever find them ;
No common fare their spirit nurses,
The New gives blessings, the Old gives curses,
 The Old delights in brutish folly,
 The New in holy virtues wholly.

Their ways are mutually repelling
Though living in this sorry dwelling ;
But this poor tent will be demolished
When all its sin is gone—abolished.
 The Old a cunning soul-constrictor,
 The New at every step a victor.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

THE LAMENT FOR THE DEER.

Angus Mac Kenzie.

Translation by Charles Edward and John Sobieski Stuart.

MAC KENZIE was head forester to Lord Lovat, and composed this *Cumha* when recovering from a severe illness.

O FOR my strength ! once more to see the hills !
The wilds of Strath-Farar of stags,
The blue streams, and winding vales,
Where the flowering tree sends forth its sweet perfume.

My thoughts are sad and dark !—
I lament the forest where I loved to roam,
The secret corries, the haunt of hinds,
Where oft I watched them on the hill !

Corrie-Garave ! O that I was within thy bosom,
Scur-na-Làpaich of steepes, with thy shelter,
Where feed the herds which never seek for stalls,
Whose skin gleams red in the sunshine of the hills.

Great was my love in youth, strong my desire,
Towards the bounding herds ;
But now, broken, and weak, and hopeless,
Their remembrance wounds my heart.

To linger in the laich I mourn,
My thoughts are ever in the hills ;
For there my childhood and my youth was nursed—
The moss and the Craig in the morning breeze was my
delight.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Then was I happy in my life,
When the voices of the hill sung sweetly ;
More sweet to me than any string,
It soothed my sorrow, rejoiced my heart.

My thoughts wandered to no other land
Beyond the hill of the forest, the shealings of the deer,
Where the nimble herds ascended the hill—
As I lay in my plaid on the dewy bed.

The sheltering hollows, where I crept towards the hart,
On the pastures of the glen, or in the forests wild—
And if once more I may see them as of old,
How will my heart bound to watch again the pass !

Great was my joy to ascend the hills
In the cause of the noble chief,
Mac Shimé of the piercing eye—never to fail at need,
With all his brave Frasers, gathered beneath his banner.

When they told of his approach, with all his ready arms,
My heart bounded for the chase—
On the rugged steep, on the broken hill,
By hollow and ridge, many were the red stags he laid
low.

He is the pride of Hunters ; my trust was in his gun,
When the sound of its shot rung in my ear,
The grey ball launched in flashing fire,
And the dun stag fell in the rushing speed of his course.

When evening came down on the hill,
The time for return to the star of the glen,
The kindly lodge where the noble gathered,
The sons of the tartan and the plaid,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

With joy and triumph they return
To the dwelling of plenty and repose ;
The bright blazing hearth—the circling wine—
The welcome of the noble chief.

A LOCH FYNE BOAT SONG.

Dr. John Mac Leod (Morven), 1801-1882.

Translation by Professor John Stuart Blackie.

*Hò mo bhàta laghach,
'Stu mo bhàta grinn ;
Hò mo bhàta laghach,
'Stu mo bhàta grinn.
Hò mo bhàta laghach,
'Stu mo bhàta grinn ;
Mo bhàta boidheach laghach,
Thogadh taobh Loch Fin.*

Ho, my bonnie boatie,
Thou bonnie boatie mine !
So trim and tight a boatie
Was never launched on brine.
Ho, my bonnie boatie,
My praise is justly thine
Above all bonnie boaties
Were builded on Loch Fyne !

.
And bonnie was my boatie,
Afloat upon the bay,
When smooth as mirror round her
The heaving ocean lay ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

While round the cradled boatie
Light troops of plummy things,
To praise the bonnie boatie
Made music with their wings.

How eager was my boatie
To plough the swelling seas,
When o'er the curling waters
Full sharply blew the breeze !
O, 'twas she that stood to windward,
The first among her peers,
When shrill the blasty music
Came piping round her ears !

And when the sea came surging
In mountains from the west,
And reared the racing billow
Its high and hissing crest ;
She turned her head so deftly,
With skill so firmly shown,
The billows they went their way,
The boatie went her own.

And when the sudden squall came
Black swooping from the Ben,
And white the foam was spinning
Around thy top-mast then,
O never knew my boatie
A thought of ugly dread,
But dashed right through the billow
With the spray-shower round her head !

Yet wert thou never headstrong
To stand with forward will,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

When yielding was thy wisdom
And caution was my skill.
How neatly and how nimbly
Thou turned thee to the wind,
With thy leese in the water,
And a swirling trail behind !

What though a lowly dwelling
On barren shore I own,
My kingdom is the blue wave,
My boatie is my throne !
I'll never want a dainty dish
To breakfast or to dine,
While men may man my boatie
And fish swim in Loch Fyne !

O, LOVELY GLEN !

Dr. John Mac Lachlan, 1804-1874.

Translation by Henry Whyte (" Fionn ").

THIS descriptive poem shows the sweet singer of Rahoy, Morven, in characteristic strain. Dr. Mac Lachlan was a lover of nature and a friend of his kind, and he has left many pieces freighted with sympathy ; and delicate as well as genial in sentiment. His poems were first published in 1868.

O, LOVELY GLEN ! as through a haze
Of tears that dim mine eye,
Upon thy fertile fields I gaze,
Fair as in days gone by.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Thy stately pines their tall heads rear
O'er fairy knolls and braes,
Thy purling streamlets now I hear
Like music's sweetest lays.

Thy herds are feeding as of yore
With sheep upon the lea,
The heron fishes in the shore,
The white-gull on the sea.

The cuckoo's voice is heard at dawn,
The dove coos in the tree,
The lark above thy grassy lawn,
Now carols loud with glee.

Repose supremely reigns o'er all,
Love crowns the mountains hoar,
And vividly they now recall
The days that are no more.

Thy gurgling brooks, and winds that fleet
Through groves of stately pine,
Awaken with their converse sweet,
Sad thoughts of auld langsyne.

Thy peaceful dwellings, once so bright,
In dreary ruins lie,
The traveller sees not from the height
The smoke ascending high.

To yonder garden, once thy pride,
No one attention shows,
And weeds grow thickly side by side
Where bloomed the blushing rose.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Where are the friends of worthy fame,
Their hearts on kindness bent,
Whose welcome cheered me when I came,
Who blessed me as I went ?

Full many in the churchyard sleep,
The rest are far away,
And I forlorn in silence weep
With neither friend nor stay.

Death in my breast has fixed his dart,
My heart is growing cold,
And from this world I'll soon depart
To rest beneath the mould.

SHINÈ BHÀN.

Evan Mac Coll, 1808-1898.

Translation by "Curliana Dingwall."

"CLARSÀIR NAM BEANN," or "The Mountain Harper," as Mac Coll was familiarly called by his countrymen, was born at Kenmore, on the shores of Loch Fyne. After a somewhat varied experience in the old country, he followed his family to Canada in 1850, and found a situation in the custom-house of Kingston. His first volume of poems was issued in 1836 under the title, *The Mountain Minstrel*. It was made up of both Gaelic and English pieces. Two years later his *Clarsach nam Beann*; or, *Poems and Songs in Gaelic*, was published. It was followed the same year by *The Mountain Minstrel*; or, *Poems and Songs in English*. The "Bard of Loch Fyne" holds the first place among the Gaelic poets of the nineteenth century. His English verse has also been much admired. Whether in English or in Gaelic, his poems are characterized by freshness, lively fancy, loving appreciation of nature, refined taste, originality of expression, and, not seldom, by a simple tenderness, which is very captivating.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

SHINÈ BHÀN one eve in May
Tending goats on Corronshear,
Heard a sound so sweet and fey,
The maiden thought that heaven was near.

She listened, and the more she heard,
The heavenly strain the sweeter grew,
She followed, and the more she strayed,
The farther passed from mortal view.

She reached at last a little hill,
And there an open door appeared,
She fancied all within was full
Of heavenly music, sweet and weird.

Enter in, O ! Shinè Bhàn ;
Come, O ! come within and stay ;
Behold the night is dark and lone,
Your father's home is far away.

She entered—if the tale be true,
And her pure heart the Merman won ;
She drunk the drink that fairies brew,
And ne'er to earth returned again.

THE PASSING OF MARY.

Evan Mac Coll.

Translation by "Curliana Dingwall."

SHE faded away as the roseate hues
In the east at the dawning of day,
When the sun in his glory ascends in the sky,
And rosy clouds change into grey.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

She faded away—as the sunshine at noon
By fleeting clouds chased o'er the plain ;
She faded away—as the rainbow at eve
Dissolves on the falling of rain.

She faded away—as the snow on the shore
O'erwhelmed by the full flowing tide,
One moment of spotless existence and then
Ah ! where does its beauty abide ?

She faded away—as the sound of the harp
Dies away on the breeze of the wold ;
She faded away—as a tale just begun
And ended before it is told.

She faded away—as moonlight in cloud,
When the sailor floats onward in fear ;
She faded away—as sweet dreams of the night
All vanish when daylight is near.

She faded away—in the beauty of youth
Passing onward through Paradise gates :
Faded away ! Ah ! Mary, thou'rt gone
To the land where the sun never sets.

THE DANES IN ISLAY.

William Livingstone, 1808-1870.

Translation by Thomas Pattison.

IN the long dramatic poem, "The Danes in Islay," from which this "wild and vigorous lyric" is taken, Livingstone, the Islay Bard, shows the deep impression made on the Gaelic mind by the warlike and remorseless Reivers of Lochlinn. Livingstone—the combative and forceful—was one of the most notable Gaelic poets of the century.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

HERE we come but we thus will not leave you—
The axe, axe ;
To-morrow will startle and grieve you—
The axe, axe ;
A red blazing torch in each dwelling—
The axe, axe ;
Your goods plundered, your captured wives yelling—
The axe, axe.
Fleeing and cursing and wailing—
The knife, knife ;
The pith of your knees shall be failing—
The knife, knife ;
They who meet us shall leave that place never—
The knife, knife ;
Morn nor eve shall they see them forever—
The knife, knife ;
None shall live to tell of the Reiver
With the axe, axe.
But the raven above shall be croaking
The axe, the axe ;
And then feast on their limbs till he's choking—
The axe, the axe.

THE BATTLE OF ALMA.

William Livingstone.

(Extract from "Duan Geall.")

Translation by Dr. Nigel Mac Neill.

TIDINGS of awe came to my ear—
An ominous threat that war was near,
I sought out Albin's central height,
To view the distant scene of fight.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

I saw beneath one standard there—
The figure of the Northern Bear.
There thousands in their armèd might
Panted for battle's fierce delight.
O'er Alma's heights the Russians rolled,
Defiant, warlike, keen, and bold ;
In war-array, the hostile force
Stood there in ranks of foot and horse ;
Then came the order for the Gael
Those scarpy brows of death to scale.
Down from the hoary, rocky crest
Poured showers of fire into their breast ;
Forward the fearless heroes leapt ;
'Mid clouds of slaughter on they swept ;
"For victory !" the Lion roared ;
The Finian clans unsheathed the sword,
Like rapid, swollen floods in Clyde ;
Grand, swift as Es-linns silver tide ;
So rushed the heroes in their might
Of ardour, to the field of fight.

THE ISLAND OF MULL.

Dugald Mac Phail, 1818-1887.

Translation by Professor John Stuart Blackie.

MAC PHAIL, who was born at Torosay, in Mull, made many contributions to Celtic periodicals. "Under the *nom de plume* 'Muileach' he contributed largely to the *Gael*, and in 1859 gained a prize given by the Celtic Society of Edinburgh for the best original essay on the Highland clearances." He did not produce much verse, but his poems have been deservedly held in high esteem.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

O THE Island of Mull is an isle of delight,
With the wave on the shore, and the sun on the height,
With the breeze on the hills and the blast on the Bens,
And the old green woods, and the old grassy glens.

Though exiled I live from the land of my race,
In Newcastle, a grey and a grimy old place,
My heart, thou fair island, is ever with thee,
And thy beautiful Bens with their roots in the sea !

O the Island, etc.

There was health in thy breeze, and the breath of thy
bowers
Was fragrant and fresh 'neath the light summer
showers,
When I wandered a boy, unencumbered and free
At the base of the Ben 'neath the old holly-tree !

O the Island, etc.

Where the Lussa was swirling in deep rocky bed,
There the white-bellied salmon, with spots of the red
And veins of dark blue, in young lustihood strong,
Was darting and leaping and frisking along !

O the Island, etc.

And a deft-handed youth there would gallantly stand
With a triple-pronged spear, smooth and sharp in his
hand,
And swiftly he pounced, like a hawk, on his prey—
And glancing and big on the bank there it lay !

O the Island, etc.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

And the red hen was there 'neath the wood's leafy pride,
And the cock he was crooning and cooing beside ;
And though forest or fence there was none on the Ben,
The red deer were trooping far up in the glen !

O the Island, etc.

O then 'twas my joy in the prime of the May
To list to the sweet-throated birds on the spray,
And to brush the cool dew from the low winding glen,
When the first ray of morning streamed down from the
Ben !

O the Island, etc.

Bright joys of my youth, ye are gone like a dream,
Like a bubble that burst on the breast of the stream ;
But my blessing, fair Mull, shall be constant with thee,
And thy green-mantled Bens with their roots in the sea !

O the Island, etc.

MY HOME IN THE HIGHLANDS.

John Campbell, 1823-1897.

Translation by Professor John Stuart Blackie.

JOHN CAMPBELL of Ledaig, who exercised "the triple function of bard, and postman, and gardener to Oban and its vicinity," produced a considerable amount of verse which won the admiration of the late Professor Blackie. He lived in a most unique house, cut out of the rock, by the shores of Loch Etive.

And I dwell in my house of the rock,
Like a bird in its breezy nest,
With an ocean of beauty around,
And a fountain of songs in my breast !

—*Blackie.*

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

DEAR land of my fathers, my home in the Highlands,
 'Tis oft that I think on thy bonnie green glens,
Thy far-gleaming lochs, and thy sheer-sided corries,
 Thy dark-frowning cliffs, and thy glory of Bens !

Thy wild sweeping torrents, with bound and with bicker,
 That toss their white manes down the steep rocky
 brae,
Thy burnies that, babbling o'er beds of the granite,
 Through thick copse of hazel are wimpling their way.

Thy close-clinging ivy, with fresh shining leafage,
 That blooms through the winter and smiles at the
 storm,
And spreads its green arms o'er the hoary old castle,
 To bind its grey ruin and keep its heart warm.

The sweet-sounding splash of thy light-rippling billows,
 As they beat on the sand where the white pebbles lie,
And their thundering war when, with whirling com-
 motion,
 They lift their white crests in grim face of the sky.

The land I was born in, the land I was bred in,
 Where soft-sounding Gaelic falls sweet on the ear ;
Dear Gaelic, whose accents take sharpness from sorrow,
 And fill me, despairing, with words of good cheer.

'Twas oft I looked backward, and wistfully turned me,
 When my travel-worn foot to the Lowlands was near ;
Like a glimpse of the sun through the dark cloud out-
 peeping
 Was the land of my love which I left with a tear.

.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

My blessing be with you, brave land and brave people;
In the bright roll of story is blazoned your name;
And may the fair fame of our forefathers never
Be blurred with dishonour or blotted with shame.

FAREWELL TO MY COUNTRY.

By a Highland Emigrant (*circa* 1834).

Translation by Professor John Stuart Blackie.

PROFESSOR BLACKIE notes in his *Language and Literature of the Highlands* that this poem was sent by Rev. Mr. Kelly of Campbeltown to Dr. Norman MacLeod, who published it in his *Leabhar nan Cnoc* in 1834. Though sent by Mr. Kelly, the authorship is not thereby absolutely fixed.

O DEAR-LOVED glen where I was born !
And must it be that rudely torn
From thee, with wife and bairns I sever,
To see thy face no more for ever ?

And must I travel far away
When strength is small and locks are grey,
And years are few, that bear me down
Like a stone that rolls from the mountain's crown ?

And eye with mist of age all dim,
And trailing foot, and laggard limb,
And a heart like a harp with a broken string,
And a breast that brings no breath to sing.

In vain you raise the strain of glee,
The blithe note wakes no joy in me,
My sun went down in the darksome west,
No more to lift his shining crest.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

O wife of my love, so mild and sweet,
Let not thy tears flow down so fleet !
Thy grief but steals thy strength away,
When friends are far in the evil day.

I'm wae to see thee, worn and wan,
And me a helpless frail old man,
And the place where we lived on plenty's store,
A place of rest for us no more.

New people are come to hold command,
And the brave and the good must beg in the land ;
The sons of the brave shall own no more
The mist-capped Ben and the wave-lashed shore !

.

Away, away, across the sea
Though the wish, God knows, was far from me ;
Nearer my heart was the prayer to God
To sleep with my kin 'neath the old green sod.

And the tears from my eyes are falling hot,
When I see the grey ruin that once was a cot,
And look for the loved ones that peopled the brae ;
But now they are scattered and far away.

.

The grace of the knolls is gone ; no more
Thou seest the seat of the elders hoar,
Where they span the praise of the good old time,
With the shrewd old saw and the wise old rhyme.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

And round them the young men sat in a ring,
And their young soul floated on wondering wing,
Drinking delight from the brave old tale,
When freedom was nursed in the land of the Gael.

.

The sail on the mast is hoisted high ;
The breeze from the Ben is sweeping nigh ;
Rest for us is here no more,
We must sleep mid ocean's roar.

Farewell, my children, we *must* go,
Though our will say ten times no !
The Ben and the glen, and the tree and the river
Must vanish from our sight for ever.

Farewell to the deer on the mountain heather,
I'll track them no more with my face to the weather ;
No more the roe on the lawn shall flee,
Nor the silly young kid on the crag from me !

Farewell to the birds that sing in the morn,
The wood and the Ben with his old grey horn ;
Farewell to the brindled goat on the brae,
The sheep with the white-fleeced lambs at play !

Farewell to the house with its liberal grace,
And the door never shut in the stranger's face !
Farewell to the old grey stones that keep
The bones of my sires in their dreamless sleep !

Farewell, dear Albyn, with Ben and glen !
This night I must leave you, and never again
My foot thy dear green sod shall know ;
Farewell, farewell—O waly woe !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

MY BONNIE NATIVE GLEN.

Neil MacLeod, b. 1843.

Translation by Henry Whyte ("Fionn").

NEIL MACLEOD, the author of the popular *Clarsach an Doire*, ranks high among the Gaelic bards of the latter half of the nineteenth century. Born in Glendale, he has spent most of his days in Edinburgh, where he has consistently cultivated his gift of song. His *Clarsach an Doire* was published in 1883. Dr. MacNeill happily remarks that "all his productions are characterised by purity of style and idiom, freshness of conception, gentleness of spirit, and liquid sweetness of versification."

WHEN the simmer bright returnin',
Decks each grove and budding tree,
When the birds amang the branches
Are a' pipin' loud and free:
And the bairnies fu' o' glee,
Pu' the roses in the den,
O! 'twere dear delight tae wander
In my bonnie native glen.

In my bonnie native glen,
In my bonnie native glen,
O! 'twere dear delight tae wander
In my bonnie native glen.

At the early peep o' mornin',
When the grass was wat wi' dew,
Amang the woods o' hazel
Gaily sang the shy cuckoo;
An' the calves, clean daft wi' joy,
Gae'd a' friskin' roun' the pen—
Now we've na sic scenes o' gladness
In my bonnie native glen.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

When the lassies gae'd a fauldin',
Aft I joined the merry thrang ;
In their hands their milkin' coggies,
An' frae ilka voice a sang.
While the echoes sweet an' clear
Wad gi'e answer frae the ben—
But we hear nae mair their liltin'
In my bonnie native glen.

.

Like mist upon the mountains
Our youthfu' days did glide ;
Now our kin and auld acquaintance
Are scattered far and wide ;
An' some are sleepin' soun'
'Neath the shadow o' the ben,
That were ance baith leal and hearty
In my bonnie native glen.

But fare ye weel each fountain,
Each dell and grassy brae,
Where aft the kye I herded
In boyhood's happy day.
When life's gloamin' settles down,
An' my race is at an en',
'Tis my wish that Death should find me
In my bonnie native glen.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

THE LAND OF BENS AND HEROES.

Neil MacLeod.

Translation by Duncan Livingstone.

THEN fill your cuachs unto the brim,
Wi' the sparkling dew's that cheer us,
For the bonnie land o' heathery hills,
The land o' bens and heroes.

There's mony a lad that's far awa',
Across the stormy ocean,
Who'd drain a toast to the land we love,
Wi' his warmest heart's devotion.

There's mony a hearth 'mang the Hielan hills,
Now mouldering cauld and dreary,
That for kindly hearts in the days of yore,
Blinked welcome, blythe, and cheery.

But though exiled 'neath foreign skies,
There's ne'er a land sae near us,
As the bonnie land o' heathery hills,
The land o' bens and heroes.

While ocean's breakers lash the shore,
The lads that fought wi' Charlie,
On land and sea, will bear the gree,
O'er ilka foeman fairly.

And when the steel is flashing far,
The world shall hear the story,
That Scotia's glaives are still as keen,
Undimmed her fame and glory.

.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

THE ISLAND I LOVE.

(EILEAN MO GHAOIL.)

Donald Mac Donald, b. 1859.

Translation by Major Duncan Matheson of Lewis.

Domhnall Domhnallach, *Bard á Bharbhas*, as the blacksmith bard of Lewis is familiarly designated, was born at Galson, in the parish of Barvas. He served in the Inverness-shire Militia for a period of ten years, and rose to the rank of Sergeant. On several occasions he has competed at the *Mods*, and has gained many prizes for Gaelic poetry and Gaelic *Sgeulaiche* (Stories), as well as prizes for oral delivery of Gaelic speech and Gaelic story.

O ISLAND belov'd ! the Isle to me ever dear !
O Island belov'd ! the Isle to me ever dear !
O Heather Isle ! drawing sons of thine ever near !
O Island belov'd ! the Isle to me ever dear !

I love every hill and glen, and headland and bay,
Each stream ever winding slowly sea-ward its way,
The flowers that amongst the waving grasses appear ;
O Island belov'd ! the Isle to me ever dear !

I love every wild-eyed heifer browsing her hills,
The myrtle and moss and moor-grass shading her rills ;
I love every corrie dark, and precipice sheer ;
O Island belov'd ! the Isle to me ever dear !

I love the grey seas that kiss the Isle I adore,
The crash of the billows' ceaseless dash on her shore,
The fishes that seek her sea-lochs emerald clear ;
O Island belov'd ! the Isle to me ever dear !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

I love all her sons pure-souled, true-hearted and brave,
Who sing of the land they gave their life-blood to save,
Her daughters (for gentle the maid this Island doth
rear);

O Island belov'd ! the Isle to me ever dear !

I love every bird that flies in th' Isle I revere,
The lark in the sky, the wild-fowl rippling the mere,
The thrush trilling songs of love in cadences clear
To th' Isle he too loves, the Isle to me ever dear.

The corn waving round each home in th' Isle that I
love

For each of her children fare sufficient will prove ;
On all she bestows the bounteous store of the year ;
O Island belov'd ! the Isle to me ever dear !

Her springs gently slake the trembling fringe of the
glens,
From heathery lips their joyous gurgling ascends,
And kind blows the breath of heaven in atmosphere
clear

In the Isle that I love, the Isle to me ever dear.

The moon and the sun that shine on th' Island I love
In love give their growth to seed and plant from above ;
The Father of Love to bless her ever is near ;
O Island belov'd ! the Isle to me ever dear !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

THE LOVE THAT WILL NOT FADE.

Anonymous.

Translation by Thomas Pattison.

THE love that will not fade,
The love that will not fade,
For thee—for thee, my fair-haired maid—
I feel the love that will not fade,
The love that will not fade.

Thy golden hair—thy sunny hair—
It seems to me the day beams there ;
And in thy face that is so fair,
Where ne'er I saw black passion's shade,
O never passion's shade.

Thine eye is blue—thine eye is bright—
And shining with celestial light ;
To watch thy smile was my delight,
O'er all thy face it sweetly played,
From thy red lips it played.

.

The love that will not fade
I give to thee, my fair-haired maid ;
O in the grave let me be laid
Before I lose thee—lowly maid—
And in my winding-sheet arrayed,
In winding-sheet arrayed.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

MONALTRI.

Anonymous.

Translation by Thomas Pattison.

THERE'S a sound on the hill,
Not of joy, but of ailing ;
Dark-haired women mourn—
Beat their hands, with loud wailing.

They cry out, Ochon !
For the young Monaltri,
Who went to the hill ;
But home came not he.

Without snood, without plaid
Katrina's gone roaming.
O Katrina, my dear !
Homeward be coming.

Och ! hear, on the castle
Yon pretty bird singing,
" Snoodless and plaidless,
Her hands she is wringing ! "

LOST LOVE.

Anonymous.

Translation by Thomas Pattison.

SICK ! Sick ! Sick !
Oh, the pain ! oh, the gloom !
He has no wish to save me
From the cold tomb.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Love ! Love ! Love !
The fair cheek, the dark hair,
The promise forgotten ;
'Twill go with me there.

False ! False ! False !
O, youth is false for ever :
He loves far more than living me—
The lifeless heather.

The hunting-field,
The greenwood tree,
The trout, the running deer, he loves,
Far more than me.

He loves—loves—loves
To stalk the frightened doe ;
He never heeds the pain he gives,
His skill to show.

O, the dark blue eye—
A flower wet with dew ;
Oh, the fair, false face—
Too sweet to view !

Fare—thee—well—well—well,
Though thou'st forsaken me ;
May every good thing follow—
Follow—follow thee.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

“BREIGEIN BINNEACH.”

(THE DECEIVER.)

Anonymous.

Translation by Thomas Pattison.

I WENT away with Breigein Binneach
And Mac Gregor Clairry.
He told me of his splendid house,
His kitchen and his dairy ;
But not a house or hall saw I,
Save, on the hillside airy,
A little bothy where he lived
With his sister Mary !

He has got but one dun cow,
Though he bragged so rarely—
It hardly gives enough of milk
For himself and Mary :
In my father's barn at home
I could lie as fairly
As in this bothy by the hill,
Which is so damp and airy.

I would leave it fast enough,
If my sire forgave me ;
I would work, and work enough—
Do anything to save me
From the Breigein Binneach's tongue
And his sister Mary's ;
I'd thrash, or plough, or keep the cows,
Or cart, or keep the dairy.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

A LADY'S MEMORY.*

Translation by Dr. George Henderson.

Pulvis et umbra sumus.

HERE on an island she who was wedded reposes—it
grieveth me—

She whose mouth was melodious, her hand all neatness
disclosing, how silently !

No ear hath she now for the blessings of them she
hath holpen when poor and faint ;

There flow but the tears and come but the fears of the
orphans,—their clothes all rent.

No more at the Table Holy we see thee ; at thine own
feast never we be :

Beauty is dead with thee, courtesy fled with thee,—
and charity.

MY DEAR LITTLE MAY.

(MALI BHEAG OG !)

Anonymous.

Translation by Lachlan Macbean.

Dost thou not see my anguish,

My dear little May ?

In dungeon dark I languish,

My own darling May ;

No eyes were sweeter, clearer,

No kisses could be dearer,

Than thine, my loving cheerer,

My dear little May.

* After the Gaelic as given by Pennant from an old tombstone in Glenorchy (Clachan Diseirt). The kirkyard is on an island.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Oh ! hapless love that sought thee,
My dear little May :
Oh ! fatal tryste* that brought thee
Along yon green brae :
We met with words endearing,
No evil were we fearing,
When horsemen came careering
In angry array.

.
What though my life were spared me,
My dear little May ;
Now it can never shared be
With kind little May !
I long to go, and never
From thee again to sever,
And there forget that ever
I wounded my May.

A FAIRY LULLABY.

Anonymous.

Translation by Lachlan Macbean.

I LEFT my darling lying here,
A-lying here, a-lying here,
I left my darling lying here,
To go and gather blae-berries.
Hóbbhan, hóbbhan, Gorry òg O,
Gorry òg O, Gorry òg O ;
Hóbbhan, hóbbhan, Gorry òg O,
I've lost my darling baby, O.

* She was accidentally slain by her lover when defending himself against her kindred, who objected to their contemplated marriage.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

I've found the wee brown otter's track,
The otter's track, the otter's track ;
I've found the wee brown otter's track,
But ne'er a trace of baby, O !

I found the track of the swan on the lake,
The swan on the lake, the swan on the lake ;
I found the track of the swan on the lake,
But not the track of baby, O !

I found the track of the yellow fawn,
The yellow fawn, the yellow fawn ;
I found the track of the yellow fawn,
But could not trace my baby, O !

I found the trail of the mountain mist,
The mountain mist, the mountain mist ;
I found the trail of the mountain mist,
But ne'er a trace of baby, O !

Hóbhan, hóbhan, Gorry òg O
Gorry òg O, Gorry òg O ;
Hóbhan, hóbhan, Gorry òg O
I've lost my darling baby, O !

CANADIAN BOAT SONG.

Anonymous.

Translation by Earl of Eglinton (?)

Also attributed to John Galt the Novelist.

LISTEN to me as when you heard our fathers
Sing long ago the song of other shores,
Listen to me, and then in chorus gather
All your deep voices as ye pull your oars—

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Fair those broad meads, those hoary woods are grand,
But we are exiles from our native land.

From the lone shealing on the misty island,
Mountains divide us and a waste of seas ;
Yet still the blood is strong, the heart is Highland,
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides.

We ne'er shall tread the fairy-haunted valley,
Where 'twixt the dark hills creeps the small clear
stream,
In arms around the patriarch's banner rally,
Nor see the moon on royal tombstones gleam.

When the bold kindred in the times long vanished,
Conquered the soil and fortified the keep,
No seer foretold the children would be banished,
That a degenerate lord might boast his sheep.

Come foreign raid, let discord burst in slaughter—
Oh ! then for clansmen's true and keen claymore ;
The hearts that would have given their blood like water,
Beat heavily beyond the Atlantic's roar.

Fair those broad meads, those hoary woods are grand,
But we are exiles from our native land.

MY COLIN, LOV'D COLIN.

Anonymous.

Translation by Mrs. Anne Grant of Laggan.

.
My Colin, dear Colin, my Colin, my love,
O where are thy herds that so loftily move ?
With branches so stately their proud heads are crowned,
With their motion so rapid the woods all resound.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Where the birch-trees hang weeping o'er fountains so
clear,
At noon-day they're sleeping round Colin, my dear ;
O Colin, sweet Colin, my Colin, my joy,
Must those flocks and those herds all thy moments
employ ?

To yon waterfalls dashing I tune my sad strain,
And gather these violets for Colin in vain ;
At sunset he said he would meet with me here,
Then where can he linger, my Colin, my dear ?

O Colin, my darling, my pleasure, my pride,
While the flocks of rich shepherds are grazing so wide,
Regardless I view them, unheeded the swains,
Whose herds scattered round me adorn the green plains.

Their offers I hear, and their plenty I see,
But what are their wealth and their offers to me ?
While the light-bounding roes, and the wild mountain
deer,
Are the cattle of Colin, my hunter, my dear.

THE HIGHLAND WIDOW'S LAMENT.

(Reminiscences of a Highland Parish.)

Anonymous.

Translation by Dr. A. Clerk.

ALAS ! alas ! woe's me, what shall I do ?
Without husband, without brother,
Without substance, without store :

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

A son in the deep, a daughter in her grave,
The son of my love on his bier—
Alas ! alas ! woe's me, what shall I do ?

Son of my love, plant of beauty,
Thou art cut low in thy loveliness ;
Who'll now head the party at their games on the plains
 of Artornish ?
The swiftest of foot is laid low.
Had I thousands of gold on the sea-covered rock,
I would leave it all and save the son of my love.
But the son of my love is laid low—
Alas ! alas ! woe's me, what shall I do ?

Land of curses is this where I lost my family and my
 friends,
My kindred and store,
Thou art a land of curses for ever to me—
Alas ! alas ! woe's me, what shall I do ?

And Duncan, thou grandson of Malcolm,
Thou wert a meteor of death to me ;
Thine hand could not guide the helm as the hand of
 my love.
But, alas ! the stem of beauty is cut down,
I am left alone in the world,
Friendless and childless, houseless and forlorn—
Alas ! alas ! woe's me, what shall I do ?

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

THE BEWITCHED BACHELOR UNBEWITCHED.

Anonymous.

Translation by Alex. Stewart, LL.D., F.S.A.

("Nether Lochaber").

THE gudeman mumbled and grumbled full sore
Over the butter-kits, all through the dairy :
Over cheese, over butter, and milk-pails he swore,
" 'Tis the work, I'll be bound, of some foul witch or
fairy.

How can I ever be happy or rich,
If robbed and tormented by fairy and witch,"
Quoth he ; and lo ! with a sudden turn
He stumbled and spilt the cream-ful churn.

He went to his mother (she dwelt in the cot
Amid the hazels down by the linn :
Full well the wild-birds loved that spot,
And taught its echoes their merry din)—
He went to his mother, that Bachelor gruff :
He was mild with her, though with others rough.

" Mother," quoth he, " I have not now
One half the butter or cheese, I trow,
That loaded my dairy shelves when you
Had charge of my household and dairy too :
Tell me mother, what shall I do ?
I vow and declare that some fairy or witch
Is robbing me still and doing me ill—I shall never be
rich."

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

"My son," the mother mild replied,

"See that you pay the fairies their due ;
A tribute due should ne'er be denied—

Others don't grudge it, and why should you ?
Nor thrive their flocks nor kine, I ween,
Who scorn or neglect the *shian* green."

"But, mother, the witch that lives down i' the glen ?"

"A widow, my son, with a fatherless oe,*
Who has seen much sorrow and years of woe ;
Give her as heretofore, my son,
Of your curds and whey, and let her alone.
And oh, my son, if you would be rich,
And free from dread of fairy and witch,
And happy and well-to-do through life—
Go get thee, my son, a winsome wife !"

The bachelor hied him home full soon—

He sent to the widow, far down in the glen,
A kebbuck of cheese as round as the moon,

Of oaten cakes he sent her ten,
With a kindly message, "Come when you may
For curds and whey in the good old way."
He sent her withal, 'tis right you should know,
A brow new kilt for her fatherless oe.

And ever he saw that his maidens paid

To the fairies their due on the *Fairy Knowe*,
Till the emerald sward was under the tread
As velvet soft, and all aglow

* *Ogha*, a grandchild.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

With wild flowers, such as fairies cull,
Weaving their garlands and wreaths for the dance
when the moon is full !

And lo ! at last he took him a wife,
A comely and winsome dame, I trow,
Who shed a sunshine over his life,
And silvered the wrinkles upon his brow.
'Twas well with the kine and well with the dairy,
Nor dreaded he ought from witch or fairy ;
(He had one of his own—she was hight *Wee Mary* !)
And often they went to the cot by the linn,
Where mavis and merle made merry din.

THE ST. KILDA MAID'S SONG.

Anonymous.

Translation by Dr. Alexander Stewart ("Nether Lochaber").

OVER the rocks, steadily, steadily ;
Down to the clefts with a shout and a shove, O ;
Warily tend the rope, shifting it readily,
Eagerly, actively, watch from above, O.
Brave, O brave, my lover true, he's worth a maiden's
love :
(*And the sea below is still as deep as the sky is high above !*)

Sweet 'tis to sleep on a well feathered pillow,
Sweet from the embers the fulmar's red egg, O ;
Bounteous our store from the rock and the billow ;
Fish and birds in good store we need never to beg, O ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Brave, O brave, my lover true, he's worth a maiden's
love :

(And the sea below is still as deep as the sky is high above!)

Hark to the fulmar and guillemot screaming :

Hark to the kittiwake, puffin, and gull, O :

See the white wings of solan goose gleaming ;

Steadily, men ! on the rope gently pull, O.

Brave, O brave, my lover true, he's worth a maiden's
love :

(And the sea below is still as deep as the sky is high above!)

Deftly my love can hook ling and conger,

The grey-fish and hake, with the net and the creel, O ;

Far from our island be plague and be hunger ;

And sweet our last sleep in the quiet of the Kiel, O.

Brave, O brave, my lover true, he's worth a maiden's
love :

(And the sea below is still as deep as the sky is high above!)

Pull on the rope, men, pull it up steadily :

*(There's a storm on the deep, see the scart claps his
wings, O) :*

Cunningly guide the rope, shifting it readily ;

Welcome my true love and all that he brings, O !

Now God be praised, my lover's safe, he's worth a
maiden's love :

(And the sea below is still as deep as the sky is high above!)

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

A LULLABY.

Anonymous.

Translation by Dr. Alexander Stewart ("Nether Lochaber").

HUSH thee, my baby-boy, hush thee to sleep,
Soft in my bosom laid, why shouldst thou weep;
Hush thee, my pretty babe, why shouldst thou fear,
Well can thy father wield broadsword and spear.

Lullaby, lullaby, hush thee to rest,
Snug in my arms as a bird in its nest;
Sweet be thy slumbers, boy, dreaming the while
A dream that shall dimple thy cheek with a smile.

Helpless and weak as thou'rt now on my knee,
My eaglet shall yet spread his wings and be free—
Free on the mountain-side, free in the glen,
Strong-handed, swift-footed, a man among men!

Then shall my *dalt* bring his *muim* a good store
Of game from the mountain and fish from the shore;
Cattle, and sheep, and goats—graze where they may—
My *dalta* will find ere the dawn of the day.

Thy father and uncles, with target and sword,
Will back each bold venture by ferry and ford;
From thy hand I shall yet drain a beaker of wine,
And the toast shall be—*Health and the laving of kine!*

Then rest thee, my foster-son, sleep and be still,
The first star of night twinkles bright on the hill;
My brave boy is sleeping—kind angels watch o'er him,
And safe to the light of the morning restore him.
Lullaby, lullaby, what should he fear,
Well can his father wield broadsword and spear!

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

LIGHT AND SHADE.

*("Tha'n oidche dorch, dubh, gun reult
Tha aibh's na speur fo ghruaman.")*

Anonymous.

Translation by Dr. Alexander Stewart ("Nether Lochaber").

DARK and dreary is the world to me,
No sun, no moon, no star ;
Vainly I struggle on my midnight sea,
No beacon gleams afar ;
A wilderness of winter, frost and snow,
Sad and alone I hang my head in woe.

'Tis vain to strive against the will of fate,
(No sun, no moon, no star) ;
Where I had looked for love, I found but hate,
(No beacon gleams afar) ;
I gave my heart, my all, to one who cares
Now nought for me—no one my sorrow shares.

Cares not my love though I were dead and gone,
(No sun, no moon, no star !)
God help me, I am weak and all alone,
(No beacon shines afar) :
I dare not speak my grief, I dare not tell ;
The fire that burns my heart no tears can quell.

Traveller that passest over hill,
(May *thy* night have its star !)
Acquaint my love that you have left me ill,
And seen my bleeding scar ;
'Twere better to have killed than maimed me thus—
A bird with broken wing in the lone wilderness.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

I once was happy, and how bright was then
Sun, moon, and every star !

Spotless and pure I laughed along the glen ;
When swift to mar

This happiness and peace, the spoiler came
And left me all bereft—the child of shame.

And yet I do not hate him, woe is me,
(No sun, no moon, no star !)

But shun him, O ye maidens frank and free !
'Twere better far

That you were lifeless laid in the cold tomb,
In all your virgin pride and beauty's bloom.

But God is good, and he will mercy have ;
(How bright the morning star !)

Even the weary-laden find a grave—
(The beacon shines afar !)

Bless, Father of our Lord so meek and mild,
An erring mother and a helpless child.

DROWNED.

Anonymous.

Translation by Dr. Alexander Stewart.

No wonder my heart it is sore,
No wonder the tears that I weep ;
My true love I'll see him no more,
He lies fathoms down in the deep.

He lies fathoms down in the deep,
Where the cold clammy sea-weeds abound ;
How cruel thy wild waves to me,
O sea that my true love hast drowned !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

O sea that my true love hast drowned,
Thou has 'reft me of joy evermore ;
Thy waves make me shudder with fear
As I listen and hear their wild roar.

My true love and I, hand in hand,
Often wandered the uplands among,
Where the wild flowers are freshest to see,
And the wild birds are freest of song ;

But alas for the days that are gone,
Alas for my sorrow and me !
Alas that my true love is drowned
Fathoms down in the depths of the sea !

THE EMIGRANTS.

Anonymous.

O Laogh mo chridhe ! I'm thinking of thee,
As I wait for the sad ship's sailing.
My heart's 'neath the stone where you're lying so lone,
But the bairnies from want are wailing.

Yet home of my heart; Oh how can we part !
O Mairi mo rùn, dost thou hear me ?
Across the milk foam, I must seek a new home,
Without thy dear welcome to cheer me.

Oh lonely green glen ! Oh cloud-shadowed Ben !
Oh graves where my kindred are sleeping ;
I bid you farewell, with a grief none can tell,
And a heart that is weary with weeping.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

THE ISLE OF MIST.

(EILEAN A CHEÒ.)

Extract.

Anonymous.

Translation by Dr. George Henderson.

My tresses are graying
With sorrow and pain,
And my fifty years' sun sets
In storm, cloud, and rain ;
But hope is still high, and
My heart's cherished trust,
Is again to behold thee,
Dear Island of Mist.

Thou hope of the stalwart
In hardiness reared,
Whose valour friends valued,
And enemies feared ;
Who grudged not their blood
In defence of our soil,
Tho' the dearest place there
Was their own Misty Isle.

Bless'd land of my childhood !
To me holy ground,
Thou Isle of brown mountains
With misty light crowned ;
Where the dawn hath a glory,
There, there, only seen,
And Stoir towers radiant,
Where the night clouds have been.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

PRAYERS AND INVOCATIONS.

FROM *Carmina Gadēlica*, being prayers, invocations, etc., of the Roman Catholics of the Outer Hebrides, collected and translated by

Dr. Alexander Carmichael.

THE GUIDING LIGHT OF ETERNITY.

O GOD, who bringest me from the rest of last night
Unto the joyous light of this Thy day,
Be Thou bringing me from the new light of this Thy
day

Unto the guiding light of eternity.

Oh! from the new light of this Thy day
Unto the guiding light of eternity.

THE SMOORING BLESSING.

I AM smooring the fire,
As it is smooored by the Son of Mary.
Blest be the house, blest be the fire,
And blessed be the people all.
Who are those on the floor? Peter and Paul.
Upon whom devolves the watching to-night?
Upon fair gentle Mary and her Son.
The mouth of God said, the angel of God tells.
An angel in the door of every house,
To shield and to protect us all,
Till bright daylight comes in the morning.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

MORNING PRAYER.

God with me lying down,
God with me rising up,
God with me in every ray of light,
Nor a ray without Him.
The God directing me,
The Lord protecting me,
The Spirit of God governing me
Now and for ever, Amen !
The Lord of Lords, Amen !

THE KINDLING HYMN.

I will kindle my fire this morning,
In presence of heaven's holy angels,
In presence of Gabriel of loveliest form,
In presence of Michael of the myriad charms.
Without malice, without jealousy, without envy,
Without fear, without terror of anyone under the
sun.
But God's own Holy Son to shield me.

O ! God, kindle Thou in my heart within
A love of love towards my neighbour,
Towards my foe, towards my friend, towards my
kindred all,
Towards the brave, towards the knave, towards the
thrall.
O Holy Son ! of the loveliest Mary,
From the lowliest thing that liveth
To the Name that is highest of all.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

THE SHEILING HYMN.

THOU gentle Michael of the white steeds
Who subdued the Dragon of Blood,
For love of God and of Mary's Son
Spread over us thy wing, shield us all.

Mary beloved ! Mother of the white Lamb
Protect us, thou Virgin of nobleness ;
Queen of beauty, Shepherdess of the flocks !
Keep our cattle, surround us together.

Thou Columba, the friendly, the kind,
In name of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit Holy,
Through the Three-in-One, through the Three,
Encompass us, guard our procession.

Thou Father ! Thou Son ! Thou Spirit Holy !
Be the Three-in-One with us day and night,
On the machair plain, on the mountain ridge,
The Three-in-One is with us, with His arm under our
head.

AN INVOCATION.

BLESS, O Chief of generous Chiefs,
Myself and everything anear me,
Bless me in all my actions,
Make thou me safe for ever,
Make thou me safe for ever.

From every brownie and ban-shee,
From every evil wish and sorrow,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

From every nymph and water-wraith,
From every fairy mouse and grass-mouse,
 From every fairy mouse and grass-mouse.

From every troll among the hills,
From every siren hard pressing me,
From every ghoul within the glens,
Oh ! save me till the end of my day,
 Oh ! save me till the end of my day.

A GAELIC RÙN OF EIGG.

THE RÙN OF HOSPITALITY.

Translation by Kenneth MacLeod, M.A.

I SAW a stranger yestreen ;
I put food in the eating place,
Drink in the drinking place,
Music in the listening place ;
In the sacred name of the Triune,
He blessed myself and my house,
My cattle and my dear ones ;
And the lark said in her song,
 Often, often, often
Goes the Christ in the stranger's guise,
 Often, often, often
Goes the Christ in the stranger's guise.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

A GAELIC RÙN OF EIGG.

THE PILGRIM'S RÙN.

Translation by Kenneth MacLeod, M.A.

KING of the Elements—Love-Father of Bliss—
In my pilgrimage from airt to airt,
 From airt to airt,
May each evil be a good to me,
May each sorrow be a gladness to me,
 And may Thy Son be my foster-brother,
 Oh may Thy Son be my foster-brother.

Holy Spirit—Spirit of Light—
A pilgrim I throughout the night,
 Throughout the night;
Lave my heart pure as the stars,
Lave my heart pure as the stars,
 Nor fear I then the spells of evil,
 The spells of evil.

Jesu, Son of the Virgin pure,
Be thou my pilgrim-staff throughout the lands,
 Throughout the lands,
Thy love is all my thoughts, thy likeness in my face,
May I heart-warm to others, and they heart-warm to
 me,
 For love of the love of Thee,
 For love of the love of Thee.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
Be the Three-One with me by day, by night,
By night, by day,
On the crest of the waves, on the side of the bens,
May our Mother be there, may her arm be under my
head,
O may our Mother be there,
And her arm under my head.

KEPPOCH CHARM-STONE INCANTATION.

LET me dip thee in the water,
Thou yellow, beautiful gem of Power!
In water of purest wave,
Which pure was kept by Bridget.

In the name of the Apostles twelve,
In the name of Mary, Virgin of virtues,
And in the name of the High Trinity,
And all the shining angels,
A blessing on the gem,
A blessing on the water, and
A healing of bodily ailments to each suffering creature.

PART II.

English Verse Relating to the
Highlands.

ENGLISH VERSE RELATING TO THE HIGHLANDS.



BRUCE'S FIGHT WITH THE MAC DOUGALLS AT DALRY.

John Barbour, 1316?–1395.

. Twa brethir war in that land,
That war the hardiest off hand
That war in till all that cuntré ;
And thai had sworn, iff thai micht se
The Bruyss, quhar thai mycht him our ta,
That thai suld dey, or then hym sla.
Thar surname wes Makyne Drosser ; *
That is al so mekill to say her
As the Durwarth sonnys perfay.
Off thar cowyne the thrid had thai ;
That wes rycht stout, ill, and feloune.
Quhen thai the king of gud renoune
Saw sua behind his mengne ride,
And saw him torne sa mony tide,
Thai abaid till that he was
Entryt in ane narrow place,
Betuix a louchside and a bra ;

* *Mac-an-Dorsair*, the son of the Door-keeper—Doorward or Durward.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

That wes sa strait, Ik wndera,
That he mycht nocht weill turn his sted.
Then with a will till him thai yede ;
And ane him by the bridill hynt:
But he raucht till him sic a dynt,
That arme and schuldyr flaw him fra.
With that ane othir gan him ta
Be the lege, and his hand gan schute
Betuix the sterap and his fute :
And quhen the king feld thar his hand,
In his sterapys stythly gan he stand,
And strak with spuris the stede in hy ;
And he lausyt furth delyuerly,
Swa that the tothyr failyeit fete ;
And nocht for thi his hand wes yeit
Wndyr the sterap, magre his.
The thridd, with full gret hy, with this
Rycht till the bra syd he yeid,
And stert be hynd hym on his sted.
The king wes then in full great press ;
The quhethir he thought, as he that wes
In all hys dedys awisé,
To doe ane owtrageouss bounté.
And syne hyme that behynd hym wass,
All magre his will him gan he rass
Fra be hynd hym, thocht he had sworn,
He laid hym ewyn him befor.
Syne with the suerd sic dynt hym gave,
That he the heid till the harnys clave.
He rouschit doun off blud all rede,
As he that stound feld off dede.
And then the king, in full gret hy,
Strak at the tothir vigorously,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

That he eftir his sterap drew,
That at the fyrst strak he him slew.
On this wiss him delyuerit he
Off all thai felloun fayis thre.

WALLACE'S FIGHT WITH MAC FADYEN AT LOCH AWE.

Henry the Minstrel (Blind Harry), *circa* 1430.

THE knycht Cambell in Argyll than wes still,
With his gud men, agayne king Eduuardis will;
And kepyt fre Lowchow, his heretage:
Bot Makfadyan than did him gret owtrage.
This Makfadyan till Inglissmen was suorn;
Eduuard gaiff him bath Argill and Lorn.
Falss Jhon off Lorn to that gyft can concord;
In Ingland than he was new maid [ane] lord.
Thus falssly he gaiff our his heretage,
And tuk at London off Eduuard grettar wage.
Duncan off Lorn yeit for the landis straiff,
Quhill Makfadyan ourset him with the laiff;
Put him off force to gud Cambell the knycht,
Quhilk in to wer was wyss, worthi, and wicht.

.

Fyftene thousand off curssyt folk in deid,
Off all gaddryn, in host he * had to leid:
And mony off thaim was out off Irland brocht,
Barnyss nor wyff thai peple sparyt nocht;
Waistyt the land als fer as thai mycht ga;
Thai bestly folk couth nocht bot byrn and sla.
In to Louchow he entryt sodeynly.

.

* Makfadyan.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Bot all his craft awailyeit him rycht nocht.
Dunkane of Lorn has seyne the sodeyne case ;
Fra guid Cambell he went to seik Wallace,
Sum help to get off thar turment and teyne.
To gydder before in Dundé thai had beyne,
Lerand at scule in to thair tendyr age.

.

Than Wallace thocht was maist on Makfadyane,
Off Scottis men he had slayne mony ane.
Wallace awowide, that he suld wrokyn be
On that rebald, or ellis tharfor to de.

.

At Stirlyng bryg assemlyt till hym rycht
Twa thowsand men, that worthi war and wycht
Towart Argyll he bownyt him to ryd ;
Duncan off Lorn was thair trew sekyr gid.

.

Duncan off Lorn Gilmychall fra thaim send,
A spy to be, for he the contré kend.

.

Thus Wallace ost began to tak the hicht ;
Our a montayne sone passit off thar sicht.
In Glendowchar thair spy met thaim agayn,
With lord Cambell ; than was our folk rycht fayn.

.

Than Wallace ost apon thair fute thai lycht ;
Thar horss thai left, thocht thai war neur so wicht ;
For moss and crag thai mycht no langer dre.
Than Wallace said, "Quha gangis best lat se."
Throuch out the moss delyuerly thai yeid ;
Syne tuk the hals, quharoff thai had most dreid.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Endlang the schoir ay four in frownt thai past,
Quhill thai with in assemblit at the last.
Lord Cambell said ; " We haiff chewyss this hauld ;
" I trow to God thair wakynning sall be cauld.
" Her is na gait to fle yone peple can,
" Bot rochis heich, and wattir depe and wan."
Auchtene hundreth off douchty men in deid
On the gret ost, but mar process, thai yeid,
Fechtand in frount, and mekill maistry maid ;
On the frayt folk buskyt with outyn baid.
Rudly till ray thai ruschit thaim agayne ;
Gret part off thaim wes men off mekill mayne.
Gud Wallace men sa stowtly can thaim ster,
The battaill on bak fyve akyr breid thai ber ;

.
The felloun stour was awful for to se ;
Macfadyane than so gret debait maid he,
With Yrage men, hardy and curageous,
The stalwart stryff rycht hard and peralous ;
Boundance of blud fra woundis wid and wan ;
Stekit to deid on ground lay mony man.

.
The Irland folk than maid thaim for the flycht ;
On craggis clam and sum in wattir flett :
Twa thousand thar drownyt with outyn lett.
Born Scottis men baid still into the feild ;
Kest wappynys [fra] thaim, and on thar kneis kneild :
With petouss woice thai cryt apon Wallace,
For Goddis saik to tak thaim in his grace.

.
Makfadyane fled, for all his felloun stryff,
On till a cave, within a clyfft off stayne,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Wndyr Cragmor, with fyftene is he gayne.
Duncan off Lorn his leyff at Wallace ast ;
On Makfadyane with worthi men he past.
He grantyt him to put thaim all to ded :
Thai left nane quyk, syne brocht Wallace his hed ;
Apon a sper throuch out the feild it bar.
The lord Cambell syne hynt it by the har ;
Heich in Cragmor he maid it for to stand,
Steild on a stayne for honour off Irland.

THE BATTLE OF HARLAW (1411).

Anonymous Ballad.

From Professor Aytoun's Collection.

As I cam in by Garioch land,
And doun by Netherha',
There was fifty thousand Hielandmen,
A' marching to Harlaw.

As I cam on, and further on,
And doun, and by Balquhaim,
O there I met Sir James the Ross,
Wi' him Sir John the Græme.

" O cam ye frae the Highlands, man ?
O cam ye a' the way ?
Saw ye Mac Donnell and his men,
As they cam frae the Skye ? "

" Yes, we cam frae the Highlands, man,
And we cam a' the way ;
And we saw Mac Donnell and his men,
As they cam in frae Skye. "

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

“ O was ye near Mac Donnell’s men ?
Did ye their numbers see ?
Come, tell to me, John Hielandman,
What might their numbers be ? ”

“ Yes, we was near, and near eneugh,
And we their numbers saw ;
There was fifty thousand Hielandmen,
A’ marching to Harlaw.”

“ Gin that be true,” said James the Ross,
“ We’ll no come meikle speed ;
We’ll cry upon our merry men,
And turn our horses’ head.”

“ O na, O na ! ” says John the Græme,
“ That thing maun never be ;
The gallant Græmes were never beat,
We’ll try what we can dee.”

As I cam on, and further on,
And doun and by Harlaw,
They fell fu’ close on ilka side,
Sic straiks ye never saw.

They fell fu’ close on ilka side,
Sic straiks ye never saw ;
For ilka sword gaed clash for clash,
At the battle o’ Harlaw !

The Hielandmen wi’ their lang swords,
They laid on us fu’ sair,
And they drave back our merry men,
Three acres breadth and mair.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Brave Forbes to his brother did say,
 " O brother, dinna ye see ;
They beat us back on ilka side,
 And we'll be forced to flee ! "

" O na, O na ! my brother dear,
 O na, that maunna be !
You'll tak your gude sword in your hand,
 And ye'll gang in wi' me."

Then back to back the brothers brave,
 Gaed in amang the thrang,
And they swept down the Hielandmen,
 Wi' swords baith sharp and lang.

The first ae straik that Forbes strack,
 He gar'd Mac Donnell reel ;
And the neist ae straik that Forbes strack,
 The brave Mac Donnell fell.

And siccan a Pitlarichie,
 I'm sure ye never saw ;
As was amang the Hielandmen,
 When they saw Mac Donnell fa'.

And when they saw that he was dead,
 They turn'd and ran awa' ;
And they buried him in Legate's Den,
 A large mile frae Harlaw.

Some rade, some ran, and some did gang,
 They were o' sma' record ;
But Forbes and his merry men,
 They slew them a' the road.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

On Mononday at morning,
The battle it began ;
On Saturday at gloamin',
Ye'd scarce ken'd wha had wan.

And sic a weary buryin',
I'm sure ye never saw,
As was the Sunday after that,
On the muirs aneath Harlaw.

Gin onybody speer at ye,
For them we took awa',
Ye may tell them plain, and very plain,
They're sleeping at Harlaw !

AN EPITAPH FOR DONALD OWRE.

William Dunbar, *circa* 1460.

DONALD OWRE or Odhar—Donald of the dun colour—who was the same with Donald Dubh—Black Donald—was the representative of the Lords of the Isles, after the forfeiture in 1493.

In vice most vicious he excels
That with the vice of treason mells ;
Though he remission
Have for prodission,
Shame and suspicion aye with him dwells.

And he ever odious as ane owl,
The fault sa filthy is and foul ;
Horrible to Natour
Is ane tratour
As fiend in fratour, under a cowl.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Wha is a traitor, or ane thief,
Upon himself turns the mischief,
His fraudulent wiles
Himself beguiles,
As in the Isles is now a prief.

The fell strong traitor, Donald Owre,
Mair falset had nor other four ;
Round isles and seas
In his supplies,
On gallow treis, yet des he glour.
Falset not feet has, nor defence,
Be power, practice, nor puisance,
Though it fra licht
Be smored with slicht,
God shaws the richt with sore vengeance.

Of the false fox dissimulator,
Kind has every thief and traitor,
Efter respite
To work despite,
Mair appetite he has of nature.

Were the fox ta'en a thousand fauld,
And grace him given aye when he wald ;
Were he on plain,
All were in vain,
From hens again nicht none him hauld.

The murderer aye murder mais,*
And ever, while he be slain he slays ;
Wives thus maks mocks,
Spinnand on rocks,
Aye rins the fox while he foot has.†

* Must. † A proverb.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

FINGAL'S CHASE OF THE DEER.

From Samuel Colville's "Whigg's Supplication," 1681.

ONE man, quoth he, oft-times hath stood,
And put to flight a multitude ;
Like Samson, Wallace, and Sir Bewis,
And Finmacowl, beside the Lewis,
Who in a bucking time of year,
Did rout and chase a herd of deer,
Till he behind, and they before,
Did run a hundred miles and more,
Which, questionless, prejudg'd his toes,
For Red-shanks then did wear, no shoes,
For to this day they wear but calf ones,
Or if older, leather half-ones.
He chased them so furiously,
That they were forced to take the sea
And swam from Cowel into Arran,
In which soil, though it be but barren,
As learned antiquaries say,
Their offspring lives unto this day.

LOCHABER NO MORE.

Allan Ramsay, 1686-1758.

FAREWELL to Lochaber, and farewell my Jean,
Where heartsome with thee I've mony day been ;
For Lochaber no more, Lochaber no more,
We'll maybe return to Lochaber no more.
These tears that I shed they are a' for my dear,
And no' for the dangers attending on wear,
Tho' borne on rough seas to a far bloody shore,
Maybe to return to Lochaber no more.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Tho' hurricanes rise, an' rise every wind,
They'll ne'er mak' a tempest like that in my mind ;
Tho' loudest o' thunders on louder waves roar,
That's naething like leaving my love on the shore.
To leave thee behind me my heart is sair pain'd ;
By ease that's inglorious no fame can be gain'd ;
An' beauty an' love's the reward o' the brave,
An' I must deserve it before I can crave.

Then glory, my Jeanie, maun plead my excuse ;
Since honour commands me, how can I refuse ?
Without it I ne'er can have merit for thee,
An' without thy favour I'd better not be.
I gae, then, my lass, to win honour an' fame,
An' if I should luck to come gloriously hame,
I'll bring a heart to thee wi' love running o'er,
An' then I'll leave thee an' Lochaber no more.

THE HEBRIDEAN VISIONARY.

From "The Castle of Indolence."

James Thomson, 1700-1748.

As when a shepherd of the Hebrid-Isles,
Placed far amid the melancholy main,
(Whether it be lone fancy him beguiles,
Or that aerial beings sometimes deign
To stand embodied, to our senses plain),
Sees on the naked hill, or valley low,
The whilst in ocean Phœbus dips his wain,
A vast assembly moving to and fro ;
Then, all at once, in air, dissolves the wondrous show.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

INVISIBLE HUNTING IN THE WESTERN HIGHLANDS.

Anonymous.

From "Albania."

FIRST published in 1737, several years after the death of the author, who is said by the editor to have been a "Scots clergyman."

ERE since of old, the haughty thanes of Ross—
So to the simple swain tradition tells—
Were wont with clans, and ready vassals thronged,
To wake the bounding stag or guilty wolf,
There oft is heard at midnight or at noon,
Beginning faint, but rising still more loud
And nearer, voice of hunter and of hounds,
And horns hoarse-winded, blowing far and keen ;
Forthwith the hubbub multiplies, the gale
Labours with wilder shrieks, and rifer din
Of hot pursuit, the broken cry of deer
Mangled by throttling dogs, the shouts of men,
And hoofs thick beating on the hollow hill.
Sudden the grazing heifer in the vale
Starts at the noise, and both the herdsman's ears
Tingle with inward dread. Aghast he eyes
The mountain's height, and all the ridges round,
Yet not one trace of living wight discerns ;
Nor knows, o'erawed and trembling, as he stands,
To what, or whom, he owes his idle fear—
To ghost, to witch, to fairy, or to fiend—
But wonders, and no end of wondering finds.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

INCHKENNETH.

Dr. Samuel Johnson, 1709-1784.

Translated from the Latin by Sir Daniel K. Sandford.

SCARCE spied amidst the West-sea foam,
Yet once Religion's chosen home,
Appears the isle whose savage race
By Kenneth's voice was won to grace.
Oer glassy tides I thither flew,
The wonders of the spot to view ;
In lonely cottage great Maclean
Held his high ancestral reign,
With daughters fair, whom Love might deem
The Naiads of the Ocean-stream ;
Yet not in chilly caverns rude
Were they like Danube's lawless brood,
But all that charms a polished age,
The tuneful lyre, the learned page,
Combined to beautify and bless
That life of ease and loneliness.
Now dawned the day whose holy light
Puts human hopes and cares to flight,
Nor 'mid the hoarse waves' circling swell
Did Worship here forget to dwell.
What though beneath a woman's hand
The Sacred Volume's leaves expand,
No need of priestly sanction there—
The sinless heart makes holy prayer !
Then wherefore further seek to rove,
While here is all our hearts' approve—
Repose, security, and love ?

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

ON THE POPULAR SUPERSTITIONS OF THE HIGHLANDS OF SCOTLAND.

William Collins, 1721-1756.

HOME, thou * return'st from Thames, whose Naiads
long
Have seen thee lingering with a fond delay,
'Mid those soft friends, whose hearts, some future
day,
Shall melt, perhaps, to hear thy tragic song.

.
Fresh to that soil thou turn'st, whose every vale
Shall prompt the poet, and his song demand :
To thee thy copious subjects ne'er shall fail ;
Thou need'st but take thy pencil to thy hand,
And paint what all believe, who own thy genial land.

There must thou wake perforce thy Doric quill ;
'Tis Fancy's land to which thou set'st thy feet ;
Where still, 'tis said, the fairy people meet,
Beneath each birken shade, on mead or hill.
There each trim lass, that skims the milky store,
To the swart tribes their creamy bowl allots ;
By night they sip it round the cottage door,
While airy minstrels warble jocund notes.
There, every herd, by sad experience, knows
How, winged with fate, their elf-shot arrows fly,
When the sick ewe her summer food forgoes,
Or, stretched on earth, the heart-smit heifers lie.
Such airy beings awe the untutored swain :

* Dr. Johnson, in his *Lives of the Poets*, says this Ode was
inscribed to Mr. John Hume.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Nor thou, though learned, his homelier thoughts neglect:
Let thy sweet Muse the rural faith sustain;
These are the themes of simple, sure effect,
That add new conquests to her boundless reign,
And fill, with double force, her heart-commanding
strain.

E'en yet preserved, how often may'st thou hear,
Where to the pole the Boreal mountains run,
Taught by the father to his listening son,
Strange lays, whose power had charmed a Spenser's ear.
At every pause, before thy mind possest,
Old Runic bards should seem to rise around,
With uncouth lyres, in many-coloured vest,
Their matted hair with boughs fantastic crowned:
Whether thou bid'st the well-taught hind repeat
The choral dirge, that mourns some chieftain brave,
When every shrieking maid her bosom beat,
And strewed with choicest herbs his scented grave;
Or whether, sitting in the shepherd's shiel,
Thou hear'st some sounding tale of war's alarms:
When at the bugle's call, with fire and steel,
The sturdy clans poured forth their brawny swarms,
And hostile brothers met, to prove each other's arms.

'Tis thine to sing, how, framing hideous spells,
In Skye's lone isle, the gifted wizard seer
Lodged in the wintry cave with "Fate's fell spear,"
Or in the depths of Uist's dark forest dwells:
How they, whose sight such dreary dreams engross,
With their own vision oft astonished droop,
When o'er the watery strath or quaggy moss
They see the gliding ghosts unbodied troop.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Or, if in sports, or on the festive green,
Their "destined" glance some fated youth descry,
Who now, perhaps, in lusty vigour seen,
And rosy health, shall soon lamented die.
For them the viewless forms of air obey,
Their bidding heed, and at their beck repair;
They know what spirit brews the stormful day,
And heartless, oft like woody Madness, stare
To see the phantom train their secret work prepare.

What though far off, from some dark dell espied,
His glimmering mazes cheer the excursive sight,
Yet turn, ye wanderers, turn your steps aside,
Nor trust the guidance of that faithless light;
For watchful, lurking 'mid the unrustling reed,
At those mirk hours the wily monster lies,
And listens oft to hear the passing steed,
And frequent round him rolls his sullen eyes,
If chance his savage wrath may some weak wretch
surprise.

Ah, luckless swain, o'er all unblest indeed!
Whom late bewildered in the dank, dark fen,
Far from his flocks, and smoking hamlet, then!
To that sad spot where hums the sedgy weed:
On him, enraged, the fiend in angry mood
Shall never look with Pity's kind concern,
But instant, furious, raise the whelming flood
O'er its drowned banks, forbidding all return!
Or, if he meditate his wished escape,
To some dim hill that seems uprising near,
To his faint eye the grim and grisly shape,
In all its terrors clad, shall wild appear.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Meantime the watery surge shall round him rise,
 Poured sudden forth from every swelling source !
What now remains but tears and hopeless sighs ?
 His fear-shook limbs hath lost their youthly force,
And down the waves he floats a pale and breathless
 corse !

For him in vain his anxious wife shall wait,
 Or wander forth to meet him on his way ;
For him in vain at to-fall of the day
His babes shall linger at the unclosing gate !
 Ah, ne'er shall he return ! Alone, if night
Her travelled limbs in broken slumbers steep,
 With drooping willows drest, his mournful sprite
Shall visit sad, perchance, her silent sleep :
Then he, perhaps, with moist and watery hand,
 Shall fondly seem to press her shuddering cheek,
And with his blue swol'n face before her stand
 And, shivering cold, these piteous accents speak :
" Pursue, dear wife, thy daily toils pursue,
 At dawn or dusk, industrious as before ;
Nor e'er of me one helpless thought renew,
 While I lie weltering on the osiered shore,
Drowned by the Kelpie's wrath, nor e'er shall aid thee
 more ! "

Unbounded is thy range ; with varied style
 Thy Muse may, like those feathery tribes which
 spring
From their rude rocks, extend her skirting wing
Round the moist marge of each cold Hebrid isle,
 To that hoar pile which still its ruin shows,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

In whose small vaults a pigmy folk is found,
Whose bones the delver with his spade upthrows,
And culls them, wondering, from the hallowed ground !
Or thither, where, beneath the showery west,
The mighty kings of three fair realms are laid ;
Once foes, perhaps, together now they rest,
No slaves revere them, and no wars invade :
Yet frequent now, at midnight's solemn hour,
The rifted mounds their yawning cells unfold,
And forth the monarchs stalk with sovereign power,
In pageant robes, and wreathed with sheeny gold,
And on their twilight tombs aërial council hold.

.
Nor need'st thou blush that such false themes engage
Thy gentle mind, of fairer stores possesst :
For not alone they touch the village breast,
But filled in elder time, the historic page.
There Shakespeare's self, with every garland crown'd,
In musing hour his wayward sisters found,
And with their terrors drest the magic scene.
From them he sung, when, 'mid his bold design,
Before the Scot, afflicted and aghast !
The shadowy kings of Banquo's fated line
Through the dark cave in gleamy pageant passed.
Proceed ! nor quit the tales which, simply told,
Could once so well my answering bosom pierce ;
Proceed, in forceful sounds and colours bold,
The native legends of thy land rehearse ;
To such adapt thy lyre, and suit thy powerful verse.

.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

O WHERE, TELL ME WHERE?

Mrs. Anne Grant of Laggan, 1755-1838.

"O WHERE, tell me where, is your Highland laddie
gone ?

O where, tell me where, is your Highland laddie
gone ? "

" He's gone with streaming banners, where noble deeds
are done ;

And my sad heart will tremble till he comes safely
home."

" O where, tell me where, did your Highland laddie
stay ?

O where, tell me where, did your Highland laddie
stay ? "

" He dwelt beneath the holly-trees, beside the rapid
Spey ;

And many a blessing follow'd him, the day he went
away."

" O what, tell me what, does your Highland laddie
wear ?

O what, tell me what, does your Highland laddie
wear ? "

" A bonnet with a lofty plume, the gallant badge of
war ;

And a plaid across the manly breast, that yet shall
wear a star."

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

“ Suppose, ah ! suppose, that some cruel, cruel wound
Should pierce your Highland laddie, and all your hopes
confound ! ”

“ The pipe would play a cheering march, the banners
round him fly ;

The spirit of a Highland chief would lighten in his eye.
The pipe would play a cheering march, the banners
round him fly ;

And for his king and country dear with pleasure he
would die !

“ But I will hope to see him yet in Scotland’s bonny
bounds ;

But I will hope to see him yet in Scotland’s bonny
bounds.

His native land of liberty shall nurse his glorious
wounds,

While wide through all our Highland hills, his warlike
name resounds.”

A HIGHLAND LAD MY LOVE WAS BORN.

Robert Burns, 1759-1796.

A HIGHLAND lad my love was born,
The Lawlan’ lads he held in scorn ;
But he still was faithfu’ to his clan,
My gallant, braw John Highlandman.

Sing, hey my braw John Highlandman !
Sing, ho my braw John Highlandman !
There’s no a lad in a’ the lan’
Was match for my John Highlandman.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Wi' his philibeg an' tartan plaid,
And guid claymore down by his side,
The ladies' hearts he did trepan,
My gallant, braw John Highlandman.

Sing, hey, &c.

We rangèd a' from Tweed to Spey,
An' lived like lords and ladies gay ;
For a Lawlan' face he feared none,
My gallant, braw John Highlandman.

Sing, hey, &c.

They banish'd him beyond the sea,
But ere the bud was on the tree,
Adown my cheeks the pearls ran
Embracing my John Highlandman.

Sing, hey, &c.

But, oh ! they catch'd him at the last,
And bound him in a dungeon fast :
My curse upon them every one,
They've hanged my braw John Highlandman.

Sing, hey, &c.

And now a widow, I must mourn
The pleasures that will ne'er return ;
No comfort but a hearty can,
When I think on braw John Highlandman.

Sing, hey, &c.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

HIGHLAND HOSPITALITY.

Robert Burns.

WHEN death's dark stream I ferry o'er ;
A time that surely shall come ;
In heaven itself, I'll ask no more,
Than just a Highland welcome.

THE HIGHLAND WIDOW'S LAMENT.

Robert Burns.

OH ! I am come to the low countrie,
Ochon, ochon, och-rie !
Without a penny in my purse,
To buy a meal to me.

It was na sae in the Highland hills,
Ochon, ochon, och-rie !
Nae woman in the countrie wide
Sae happy was as me.

For then I had a score o' kye,
Ochon, ochon, och-rie !
Feeding on the hills so high,
And giving milk to me.

And there I had three score o' yowes,
Ochon, ochon, och-rie !
Skipping on yon bonnie knowes,
And casting woo to me.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

I was the happiest o' a' the clan,
Sair, sair may I repine ;
For Donald was the brawest lad,
And Donald he was mine.

Till Charlie Stewart cam' at last,
Sae far to set us free :
My Donald's arm was wanted then,
For Scotland and for me.

Their waefu' fate what need I tell ?
Right to the wrang did yield :
My Donald and his Country fell
Upon Culloden's field.

Oh ! I am come to the low countrie,
Ochon, ochon, och-rie !
Nae woman in the world wide
Sae wretched now as me.

BANNOCKS O' BARLEY.

Robert Burns.

BANNOCKS o' bear meal,
Bannocks o' barley,
Here's to the Highlandman's
Bannocks o' barley.
Wha in a brulzie
Will first cry a parley ?
Never the lads wi'
The bannocks o' barley.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Bannocks o' bear meal,
Bannocks o' barley ;
Here's to the lads wi'
The bannocks o' barley.
Wha in his wae-days
Were loyal to Charlie ?
Wha but the lads wi'
The bannocks o' barley.

WHA'LL BE KING BUT CHARLIE ?

Lady Nairne, 1766-1845.

THE news frae Moidart cam' yestreen,
Will soon gar mony ferlie ;
For ships o' war hae just come in,
And landit Royal Charlie.

Come thro' the heather, around him gather,
Ye're a' the welcomer early ;
Around him cling wi' a' your kin ;
For wha'll be King but Charlie ?
Come thro' the heather, around him gather,
Come Ronald, come Donald, come a' thegither,
And crown your rightfu' lawfu' King !
For wha'll be King but Charlie ?

The Hieland clans, wi' sword in hand,
Frae John o' Groat's to Airlie,
Hae to a man declared to stand
Or fa' wi' Royal Charlie.

Come thro' the heather, &c.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

The Lowlands a', baith great an' sma',
Wi' mony a lord and laird, hae
Declared for Scotia's king an' law,
An' speir ye wha but Charlie.
Come thro' the heather, &c.

There's ne'er a lass in a' the lan',
But vows baith late an' early,
She'll ne'er to man gie heart or han',
Wha wadna fecht for Charlie.
Come thro' the heather, &c.

Then here's a health to Charlie's cause,
And be't complete an' early ;
His very name our heart's blood warms ;
To arms for Royal Charlie !
Come thro' the heather, &c.

THE HIGHLANDER'S FAREWELL.

JACOBITE SONG.

Anonymous.

O WHERE shall I gae seek my bread ?
O where shall I gae wander ?
O where shall I gae hide my head ?
For here I'll bide nae langer.
The seas may row, the winds may blow,
And swathe me round in danger ;
My native land I must forego,
And roam a lonely stranger.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

The glen that was my father's own
Must be by his forsaken ;
The house that was my father's home
Is levelled with the bracken.
Ochon ! ochon ! our glory's o'er,
Stolen by a mean deceiver !
Our hands are on the broad claymore ;
But the might is broke for ever.

And thou, my prince, my injured prince,
Thy people have disowned thee,
Have hunted and have driven thee hence,
With ruined chiefs around thee.
Though hard beset, when I forget
Thy fate, young helpless rover,
This broken heart shall cease to beat,
And all its griefs be over.

Farewell, farewell, dear Caledon,
Land of the Gael no longer !
A stranger fills thy ancient throne,
In guile and treachery stronger.
Thy brave and just fall in the dust,
On ruin's brink they quiver ;
Heaven's pitying e'e is closed on thee,
Adieu ! adieu for ever !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

THE WIND HAS BLAWN MY PLAID AWA'.

JACOBITE SONG.

Anonymous.

OVER the hills, an' far away,
It's over the hills, an' far away,
O'er the hills, and o'er the sea,
The wind has blawn my plaid frae me.
My tartan plaid, my ae good sheet,
That keepit me frae wind an' weet,
An' held me bien baith night an' day,
Is over the hills an' far away.

There was a wind, it cam to me,
Over the south, an' over the sea,
An' it has blown my corn and hay,
Over the hills an' far away.
It blew my corn, it blew my gear,
It neither left me kid nor steer,
An' blew my plaid, my only stay,
Over the hills an' far away.

But though 't has left me bare indeed,
And blawn my bonnet off my head,
There's something hid in Highland brae,
It hasna blawn my sword away.
Then o'er the hills an' over the dales,
Over all England, and thro' Wales,
The broadsword yet shall bear the sway
Over the hills an' far away.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

WELCOME TO SKYE.

JACOBITE SONG.

Anonymous.

THERE are twa bonny maidens,
And three bonny maidens,
Come over the Minch,
And come over the main,
Wi' the wind for their way,
And the correi for their hame ;
Let us welcome them bravely
To Skye again.

Come along, come along,
Wi' your boatie and your song,
You twa bonny maidens,
And three bonny maidens ;
For the night it is dark,
And the redcoat is gone,
And you're bravely welcome
To Skye again.

There is Flora, my honey,
So dear and so bonny,
And one that is tall,
And comely withal ;
Put the one as my king,
And the other as my queen,
They're welcome unto
The Isle of Skye again.
Come along, come along,
Wi' your boatie and your song,
You twa bonny maidens,
And three bonny maidens ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

For the lady of Macoulain
She lieth her lane,
And you're bravely welcome
To Skye again.

Her arm it is strong,
And her petticoat is long,
My one bonny maiden,
And twa bonny maidens ;
But their bed shall be clean
On the heather most crain ;
And they're welcome unto
The Isle of Skye again.
Come along, come along,
Wi' your boatie and your song,
You one bonny maiden,
And twa bonny maidens ;
By the sea-moullit's nest
I will watch o'er the main ;
And you're dearly welcome
To Skye again.

There's a wind on the tree,
And a ship on the sea,
My twa bonny maidens,
My three bonny maidens :
On the lea of the rock
Your cradle I shall rock ;
And you're welcome unto
The Isle of Skye again.
Come along, come along,
W' your boatie and your song,
My twa bonny maidens,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

My three bonny maidens :
More sound shall you sleep,
When you rock on the deep ;
And you'll aye be welcome
To Skye again.

BONNIE GEORGE CAMPBELL.

BALLAD.

Anonymous.

HIE upon Hielands, and laigh upon Tay,
Bonnie George Campbell rade out on a day ;
He saddled, he bridled, and gallant rade he ;
Hame cam' his guid horse, but never cam' he.

Doun cam' his mither dear greetin' fu' sair ;
And out ran his bonnie bride rivin' her hair ;
" My meadow lies green, and my corn is unshorn,
My barn is to big, and my babe is unborn."

Saddled and bridled and booted rade he,
A plume in his helmet, a sword at his knee ;
But toom cam' his saddle, all bluidy to see ;
Hame cam' his guid horse, but never cam' he.

ROW WEEL, MY BOATIE.

Anonymous.

Row weel, my boatie, row weel,
Row weel my merry men a',
For there's dool and there's wae in Glenfiorich's bowers,
And there's grief in my father's ha'.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

And the skiff it danc'd light on the merry wee waves,
As it flew owre the water sae blue,
And the wind it blew light, and the moon it shone
bright,
But the boatie ne'er reached Allandhu.

Ohon ! for fair Ellen, ohon !
Ohon ! for the pride of Strathcoe—
In the deep, deep sea, in the salt, salt bree,
Lord Reoch, thy Ellen lies low.

A LAMENT FOR CULLODEN.

Alexander Balfour, 1767-1829.

ALAS ! for the land of the heath-covered mountains,
Where raves the loud tempest, and rolls the dark
flood !
Alas ! for the land of the smooth crystal fountains,
The sword of the slayer has stained them with blood !
Ah, me ! for the nation so famous in story,
Where valour, and freedom, and loyalty, shone !
They gather'd around the bright star of their glory ;
But faded their laurels, their glory is gone !
Weep, Caledonia ! mourn for the fallen !

His banner, unfurled, in splendour was streaming,
The sons of the mighty were gathered around ;
Their bucklers and broadswords in brightness were
gleaming,
And high beat each heart at the loud pibroch's
sound :
They came to Culloden, the dark field of danger,
Oh ! why will not memory the record efface ?

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Alas ! for their leader, the gallant young stranger !
And woe to the traitors who wrought the disgrace !
Weep, Caledonia ! mourn for the fallen !

Alas ! for the heroes whom death has enshrouded !
Yet not for the mighty and valiant I weep ;
When darkness was lowering, their sun set unclouded,
And loud was the war-shout that lull'd them asleep ;
Their turf the gay spring with rich verdure shall cover,
The sweet flower of summer in fragrance shall bloom ;
In the mist from the mountains bright spirits shall hover,
The shades of their fathers shall glide o'er the tomb !
Weep, Caledonia ! mourn for the fallen !

Alas ! for the stranger, by fortune forsaken,
Who pillows his head on the heath-blossomed hill ;
From dreams of delight with the day to awaken,
His cheek pale and wet with the night dew so chill !
Alas ! for my country—her glory's departed—
No more shall the thistle its purple bloom wave !
But shame to the coward, the traitor, false-hearted !
And barren the black sod be aye on his grave !
Weep, Caledonia ! mourn for the fallen !

THE SPECTRE'S CRADLE SONG.

From the Eleventh Bard's Song in the "Queen's Wake."

James Hogg, 1770-1835.

"Hush ye, my bonnie babe, hush and be still !
Thy mother's arms shall shield thee from ill ;
Far have I borne thee in sorrow and pain,
To drink the breeze of the world again.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

The dew shall moisten thy brow so meek,
And the breeze of midnight fan thy cheek,
And soon shall we rest in the bow of the hill ;
Hush, my bonnie babe, hush and be still !
For thee have I travelled, in weakness and woe,
The world above and the world below.
My heart was soft, and it fell in the snare ;
Thy father was cruel, but thou wert fair.
I sinned, I sorrowed, I died for thee ;
Smile, my bonnie babe, smile on me !

“ See yon thick clouds of murky hue ;
Yon star that peeps from its window blue ;
Above yon clouds, that wander far,
Away above yon little star,
There’s a home of peace that shall soon be thine,
And there shalt thou see thy father and mine.
The flowers of the world shall bud and decay,
The trees of the forest be weeded away,
But there thou shalt bloom for ever and aye.
The time will come, I shall follow thee,
But long, long hence that time shall be ;
Smile now, my bonnie babe, smile on me ! ”

THE MERMAID’S SONG.

From the Seventeenth Bard’s Song in the “ Queen’s Wake.”

James Hogg.

MATILDA of Skye
Alone may lie,
And list to the wind that whistles by ;
Sad may she be,
For deep in the sea,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Deep, deep, deep in the sea,
This night her lover shall sleep with me.
 She may turn and hide
 From the spirits that glide,
And the ghost that stands at her bedside ;
But never a kiss the vow shall seal,
Nor warm embrace her bosom feel ;
For far, far down in the floors below,
Moist as the rock-weed, cold as the snow,
With the eel and the clam, and the pearl of the deep,
On soft sea flowers her lover shall sleep ;
And long and sound shall his slumber be,
In the coral bowers of the deep with me.

The trembling sun far, far away,
Shall pour on his couch a softened ray,
And his mantle shall wave in the flowing tide,
And the little fishes shall turn aside ;
But the waves and the tides of the sea shall cease,
Ere wakes her love from his bed of peace.
No home !—no kiss !—no, never ! never !
His couch is spread for ever and ever.

FLORA MACDONALD'S FAREWELL.

James Hogg.

FAR over yon hills of the heather sae green,
An' down by the correi that sings to the sea,
The bonnie young Flora sat sighing her lane,
 The dew on her plaid, and the tear in her e'e.
She looked at a boat wi' the breezes that swung
 Away, on the wave, like a bird of the main,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

An' aye as it lessened, she sighed an' she sung,
Fareweel to the lad I shall ne'er see again !
Fareweel to my hero, the gallant an' young,
Fareweel to the lad I shall ne'er see again.

The muircock that crows on the brows of Ben-Connal,
He kens of his bed in a sweet mossy hame ;
The eagle that soars o'er the cliffs of Clan-Ronald,
Unawed and unhunted, his eyry can claim ;
The solan can sleep on the shelve of the shore,
The cormorant roost on his rock of the sea,
But ah ! there is one whose sad fate I deplore,
Nor house, ha', nor hame in his country has he—
The conflict is past, and our name is no more—
There's nought left but sorrow for Scotland and me !

The target is torn from the arm of the just,
The helmet is cleft on the brow of the brave,
The claymore for ever in darkness must rust,
But red is the sword of the stranger and slave ;
The hoof of the horse, and the foot of the proud,
Have trod o'er the plumes on the bonnets of blue :
Why slept the red bolt in the breast of the cloud,
When tyranny revell'd in blood of the true ?
Fareweel, my young hero, the gallant and good,
The crown of thy fathers is torn from thy brow !

THE SOLITARY REAPER.

William Wordsworth, 1770-1850.

BEHOLD her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland lass !
Reaping and singing by herself.
Stop here, or gently pass !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain.
Oh, listen ! for the vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No nightingale did ever chant
So sweetly to reposing bands
Of travellers in some shady haunt
Among Arabian sands :
No sweeter voice was ever heard
In spring-time from a cuckoo-bird
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings ?
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago :
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day ?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again ?

Whate'er the theme, the maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending ;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending ;—
I listen'd till I had my fill :
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

TO A HIGHLAND GIRL.

(AT INVERNAID, UPON LOCHLOMOND.)

William Wordsworth.

SWEET Highland girl, a very shower
Of beauty is thy earthly dower !
Twice seven consenting years have shed
Their utmost bounty on thy head ;
And these gray rocks ; this household lawn ;
These trees, a veil just half withdrawn ;
This fall of water, that doth make
A murmur near the silent lake ;
This little bay, a quiet road,
That holds in shelter thy abode ;
In truth, together ye do seem
Like something fashion'd in a dream ;
Such forms as from their covert peep
When earthly cares are laid asleep !
Yet dream and vision as thou art,
I bless thee with a human heart !
God shield thee to thy latest years !
I neither know thee nor thy peers ;
And yet my eyes are fill'd with tears.
With earnest feeling I shall pray
For thee when I am far away :
For never saw I mien or face,
In which more plainly I could trace
Benignity and home-bred sense
Ripening in perfect innocence.
Here, scatter'd like a random seed,
Remote from men, thou dost not need
The embarrass'd look of shy distress,
And maidenly shamefacedness ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Thou wear'st upon thy forehead clear
The freedom of a mountaineer,
A face with gladness overspread !
Sweet looks, by human kindness bred !
And seemliness complete, that sways
Thy courtesies, about thee plays ;
With no restraint but such as springs
From quick and eager visitings
Of thoughts that lie beyond the reach
Of thy few words of English speech ;
A bondage sweetly brook'd, a strife
That gives thy gestures grace and life !
So have I, not unmoved in mind,
Seen birds of tempest-loving kind,
Thus beating up against the wind.

What hand but would a garland cull
For thee, who art so beautiful ?
Oh, happy pleasure ! here to dwell
Beside thee in some heathy dell ;
Adopt your homely ways and dress,
A shepherd, thou a shepherdess !
But I could frame a wish for thee
More like a grave reality :
Thou art to me but as a wave
Of the wild sea ; and I would have
Some claim upon thee, if I could,
Though but of common neighbourhood,
What joy to hear thee, and to see !
Thy elder brother I would be,
Thy father, anything to thee !
Now thanks to Heaven ! that of its grace
Hath led me to this lonely place.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Joy have I had ; and going hence
I bear away my recompense,
In spots like these it is we prize
Our memory, feel that she hath eyes ;
Then, why should I be loath to stir ?
I feel this place was made for her ;
To give new pleasure like the past,
Continued long as life shall last.
Nor am I loath, though pleased at heart,
Sweet Highland girl ! from thee to part ;
For I, methinks, till I grow old,
As fair before me shall behold,
As I do now, the cabin small,
The lake, the bay, the waterfall ;
And thee, the spirit of them all !

SUBLIMITY AND SOLITUDE.

From "The Lord of the Isles."

Sir Walter Scott, 1771-1832.

STRANGER ! if e'er thine ardent step hath traced
The northern realms of ancient Caledon,
Where the proud Queen of Wilderness hath placed,
By lake or cataract, her lonely throne ;
Sublime but sad delight thy soul hath known,
Gazing on pathless glen and mountain high,
Listing where from the cliff the torrents thrown
Mingle their echoes with the eagle's cry,
And with the sounding lake, and with the moaning
sky.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Yes! 'twas sublime, but sad—the loneliness
Loaded thy heart, the desert tired thine eye ;
The strange and awful fears began to press
Thy bosom with a stern solemnity.
Then hast thou wish'd some woodman's cottage nigh,
Something that show'd of life, though low and mean ;
Glad sight, its curling wreath of smoke to spy,
Glad sounds, its cock's blithe carol would have been,
Or children whooping wild beneath the willows green.

Such are the scenes, where savage grandeur wakes
An awful thrill that softens into sighs ;
Such feelings rouse them by dim Rannoch's lakes,
In dark Glencoe such gloomy raptures rise :
Or farther, where, beneath the northern skies,
Chides wild Loch-Eribol his caverns hoar—
But be the minstrel judge, they yield the prize
Of desert dignity to that dread shore,
That sees grim Coolin rise, and hears Coruiskin roar.

LULLABY OF AN INFANT CHIEF.

Sir Walter Scott.

O, HUSH thee, my babie, thy sire was a knight,
Thy mother a lady, both lovely and bright ;
The woods and the glens, from the towers which we
see,
They all are belonging, dear babie, to thee.

O ho ro, i ri ri, cadul gu lo,
O ho ro, i ri ri.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

O, fear not the bugle, though loudly it blows,
It calls but the warders that guard thy repose ;
Their bows would be bended, their blades would be red,
Ere the step of a foeman draws near to thy bed.

O ho ro, i ri ri, etc.

O, hush thee, my babie, the time will soon come
When thy sleep shall be broken by trumpet and drum ;
Then hush thee, my darling, take rest while you may,
For strife comes with manhood, and waking with day.

O ho ro, i ri ri, etc.

NORA'S VOW.

Sir Walter Scott.

HEAR what Highland Nora said,—
“The Earlie's son I will not wed,
Should all the race of Nature die,
And none be left but he and I.
For all the gold, for all the gear,
And all the lands both far and near,
That ever valour lost or won,
I would not wed the Earlie's son.”

“A maiden's vows,” old Callum spoke,
“Are lightly made, and lightly broke.
The heather on the mountain's height
Begins to bloom in purple light ;
The frost-wind soon shall sweep away
That lustre deep from glen and brae ;
Yet Nora, ere its bloom be gone,
May blithely wed the Earlie's son.”

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

"The swan," she said, "the lake's clear breast
May barter for the eagle's nest ;
The Awe's fierce stream may backward turn,
Ben Cruachan fall and crush Kilchurn ;
Our kilted clans, when blood is high,
Before their foes may turn and fly ;
But I, were all these marvels done,
Would never wed the Earlie's son."

Still in the water-lily's shade
Her wonted nest the wild swan made ;
Ben Cruachan stands as fast as ever,
Still downward foams the Awe's fierce river ;
To shun the clash of foeman's steel,
No Highland brogue has turned the heel ;
But Nora's heart is lost and won,
—She's wedded to the Earlie's son !

CORONACH.

Sir Walter Scott.

HE is gone on the mountain,
He is lost to the forest,
Like a summer-dried fountain,
When our need was the sorest.
The fount reappearing
From the raindrops shall borrow,
But to us comes no cheering,
To Duncan no morrow !

The hand of the reaper
Takes the ears that are hoary,
But the voice of the weeper
Wails manhood in glory.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

The autumn winds rushing
Waft the leaves that are serest,
But our flower was in flushing
When blighting was nearest.

Fleet foot on the correi,
Sage counsel in cumber,
Red hand in the foray,
How sound is thy slumber !
Like the dew on the mountain,
Like the foam on the river,
Like the bubble on the fountain,
Thou art gone ; and forever !

THE SUN IS SETTING ON SWEET GLENGARRY.

Robert Allan, 1774-1841.

THE sun is setting on sweet Glengarry,
The flowers are fair and the leaves are green ;
O, bonnie lass, ye maun be my dearie,
And the rose is sweet in the dew at e'en.

Doun yon glen ye never will weary,
The flowers are fair and the leaves are green ;
Bonnie lassie, ye maun be my dearie,
And the rose is sweet in the dew at e'en.

Birds are singing fu' blithe and cheery,
The flowers are fair and the leaves are green ;
Bonnie lassie, on bank sae briery,
And the rose is sweet in the dew at e'en.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

In yonder glen there's naething to fear ye,
The flowers are fair and the leaves are green ;
Ye canna be sad, ye canna be eerie,
And the rose is sweet in the dew at e'en.

The water is wimpling by fu' clearly,
The flowers are fair and the leaves are green ;
Oh ! ye shall ever be my dearie,
And the rose is sweet in the dew at e'en.

THE HIGHLANDER.

William Gillespie, 1776-1825.

FROM the climes of the sun, all war-worn and weary,
The Highlander sped to his youthful abode ;
Fair visions of home cheer'd the desert so dreary,
Though fierce was the noon-beam, and steep was the
road.

Till spent with the march that still lengthen'd before
him,
He stopp'd by the way in a sylvan retreat :
The light shady boughs of the birch-tree waved o'er
him,
The stream of the mountain fell soft at his feet.

He sunk to repose where the red heaths are blended,
On dreams of his childhood his fancy past o'er ;
But his battles are fought, and his march it is ended,
The sound of the bagpipes shall wake him no more.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

No arm in the day of the conflict could wound him,
Though war launch'd her thunder in fury to kill ;
Now the Angel of Death in the desert has found him,
And stretch'd him in peace by the stream of the
hill.

Pale autumn spreads o'er him the leaves of the forest,
The fays of the wild chant the dirge of his rest ;
And thou, little brook, still the sleeper deplorest,
And moistens the heath-bell that weeps on his breast.

LOCHIEL'S WARNING.

WIZARD—LOCHIEL.

Thomas Campbell, 1777-1844.

Wizard—

LOCHIEL, Lochiel ! beware of the day
When the Lowlands shall meet thee in battle array !
For a field of the dead rushes red on my sight,
And the clans of Culloden are scattered in fight.
They rally, they bleed, for their kingdom and crown ;
Woe, woe to the riders that trample them down !
Proud Cumberland prances, insulting the slain,
And their hoof-beaten bosoms are trod to the plain.
But hark ! through the fast flashing lightning of war,
What steed to the desert flies frantic and far ?
'Tis thine, O Glenullin ! whose bride shall await,
Like a lone-lighted watch-fire, all night at the gate.
A steed comes at morning : no rider is there ;
But its bridle is red with the sign of despair.
Weep, Albin ! to death and captivity led !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Oh weep ! but thy tears cannot number the dead ;
For a merciless sword on Culloden shall wave,
Culloden that reeks with the blood of the brave.

Lochiel—

Go, preach to the coward, thou death-telling seer !
Or, if gory Culloden so dreadful appear,
Draw, dotard, around thy old wavering sight,
This mantle, to cover the phantoms of fright.

Wizard—

Ha ! laugh'st thou, Lochiel, my vision to scorn ?
Proud bird of the mountain, thy plume shall be torn !
Say, rushed the bold eagle exultingly forth,
From his home, in the dark rolling clouds of the north ?
Lo ! the death-shot of foemen outspeeding, he rode
Companionless, bearing destruction abroad ;
But down let him swoop from his havoc on high !
Ah ! home let him speed—for the spoiler is nigh !
Why flames the far summit ? Why shoot to the blast
Those embers, like stars from the firmament cast ?
'Tis the fire-shower of ruin, all dreadfully driven
From his eyrie, that beacons the darkness of heaven.
Oh, crested Lochiel ! the peerless in wight,
Whose banners arise on the battlement's height,
Heaven's fire is around thee, to blast and to burn ;
Return to thy dwelling ! all lonely return !
For the blackness of ashes shall mark where it stood,
And a wild mother scream o'er her famishing brood.

Lochiel—

False wizard, avaunt ! I have marshalled my clan,
Their swords are a thousand, their bosoms are one !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

They are true to the last of their blood and their breath,
And like reapers, descend to the harvest of death.
Then welcome be Cumberland's steed to the shock !
Let him dash his proud foam like a wave on the rock !
But woe to his kindred, and woe to his cause,
When Albin her claymore indignantly draws ;
When her bonneted chieftains to victory crowd,
Clanronald the dauntless, and Moray the proud,
All plaided and plumed in their tartan array—

Wizard—

—Lochiel, Lochiel ! beware of the day :
For, dark and despairing, my sight I may seal,
But man cannot cover what God would reveal ;
'Tis the sunset of life gives me mystical lore,
And coming events cast their shadows before.
I tell thee, Culloden's dread echoes shall ring
With the bloodhounds that bark for thy fugitive king.
Lo ! anointed by Heaven with the vials of wrath,
Behold, where he flies on his desolate path !
Now in darkness and billows, he sweeps from my sight ;
Rise, rise ! ye wild tempests, and cover his flight !
'Tis finished. Their thunders are hushed on the moors ;
Culloden is lost, and my country deplores.
But where is the iron-bound prisoner ? Where ?
For the red eye of battle is shut in despair.
Say, mounts he the ocean-wave, banished, forlorn
Like a limb from his country cast bleeding and torn ?
Ah no ! for a darker departure is near ;
The war-drum is muffled, and black is the bier ;
His death-bell is tolling : oh ! mercy, dispel
Yon sight, that it freezes my spirit to tell !
Life flutters convulsed in his quivering limbs,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

And his blood-streaming nostril in agony swims.
Accursed be the faggots, that blaze at his feet,
Where his heart shall be thrown, ere it ceases to beat,
With the smoke of its ashes to poison the gale—

Lochiel—

—Down, soothless insulter ! I trust not the tale :
For never shall Albin a destiny meet,
So black with dishonour, so foul with retreat.
Tho' my perishing ranks should be strewed in their
gore,
Like ocean-weeds heaped on the surf-beaten shore,
Lochiel, untainted by flight or by chains,
While the kindling of life in his bosom remains,
Shall victor exult, or in death be laid low,
With his back to the field, and his feet to the foe !
And leaving in battle no blot on his name,
Look proudly to heaven from the death-bed of fame.

LORD ULLIN'S DAUGHTER.

Thomas Campbell.

A CHIEFTAIN, to the Highlands bound,
Cries, " Boatman, do not tarry !
And I'll give thee a silver pound,
To row us o'er the ferry."

" Now who be ye, would cross Lochgyle,
This dark and stormy water ?"
" O I'm the chief of Ulva's Isle,
And this Lord Ullin's daughter.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

“ And fast before her father’s men
Three days we’ve fled together,
For should he find us in the glen,
My blood would stain the heather.

“ His horsemen hard behind us ride ;
Should they our steps discover,
Then who will cheer my bonny bride
When they have slain her lover ? ”

Out spoke the hardy Highland wight,
“ I’ll go, my chief—I’m ready :
It is not for your silver bright ;
But for your winsome lady :

“ And by my word ! the bonny bird
In danger shall not tarry :
So though the waves are raging white,
I’ll row you o’er the ferry.”

By this the storm grew loud apace,
The water-wraith was shrieking ;
And in the scowl of Heaven each face
Grew dark as they were speaking.

But still as wilder blew the wind,
And as the night grew drearer,
Adown the glen rode armed men,
Their trampling sounded nearer.—

“ O haste thee, haste ! ” the lady cries,
“ Though tempests round us gather ;
I’ll meet the raging of the skies,
But not an angry father.”—

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

The boat has left a stormy land,
A stormy sea before her,
When, oh ! too strong for human hand,
The tempest gathered o'er her.—
And still they rowed amidst the roar
Of waters fast prevailing :
Lord Ullin reached that fatal shore,
His wrath was changed to wailing.
For sore dismayed, through storm and shade,
His child he did discover :
One lovely hand she stretched for aid,
And one was round her lover.
“Come back ! come back !” he cried in grief,
Across the stormy water :
“And I'll forgive your Highland chief,
My daughter ! oh, my daughter !”
’Twas vain : the loud waves lashed the shore,
Return or aid preventing :
The waters wild went o'er his child,
And he was left lamenting.

JOY OF MY HEART.

(’STU MO RÙN.)

Dr. Robert Couper, *circa* 1799.

RED, red is the path to glory,
Thick yon banners meet the sky,
O my Geordie, death's before ye,
Turn and hear my boding cry.
Joy of my heart, Geordie agam,
Joy of my heart, 'stu mo rùn.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Turn and see thy tartan plaidie
Rising o'er my broken heart ;
O my bonnie Highland laddie
Sad am I with thee to part.
Joy of my heart, Geordie agam,
Joy of my heart, 'stu mo rùn.

TURN YE TO ME.

Professor John Wilson ("Christopher North"), 1785-1854.

THE stars are shining cheerily, cheerily,
Ho ro Mhairi dhu, turn ye to me ;
The sea-mew is moaning drearily, drearily,
Ho ro Mhairi dhu, turn ye to me.
Cold is the storm-wind that ruffles his breast,
But warm are the downy plumes lining his nest ;
Cold blows the storm there,
Soft falls the snow there,
Ho ro Mhairi dhu, turn ye to me.

The waves are dancing merrily, merrily,
Ho ro Mhairi dhu, turn ye to me ;
The sea-birds are wailing wearily, wearily,
Ho ro Mhairi dhu, turn ye to me.
Hushed be thy moaning, lone bird of the sea,
Thy home on the rocks is a shelter to thee,
Thy home is the angry wave,
Mine but the lonely grave,
Ho ro Mhairi dhu, turn ye to me.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

GLEN-NA-H'ALBYN.

Alexander Laing, 1787—

ON the airy Ben Nevis the wind is awake,
The boat's on the shallow, the ship on the lake ;
Ah ! now in a moment my country I leave ;
The next I am far away—far on the wave !

Oh ! fare thee well, fare thee well, Glen-na-h'Albyn !
Oh ! fare thee well, fare thee well, Glen-na-h'Albyn !

I was proud of the power and the fame of my chief,
And to build up his House was the aim of my life ;
And now in his greatness he turns me away,
When my strength is decay'd and my locks worn gray.

Oh ! fare thee well !

Farewell the gray stones of my ancestors' graves,
I go to my place 'neath the foam of the waves,
Or to die unlamented on Canada's shore,
Where none of my fathers were gathered before !

Oh ! fare thee well, fare thee well, Glen-na-h'Albyn !
Oh ! fare thee well, fare thee well, Glen-na-h'Albyn !

THE DEATH OF CLANRONALD.

“To-day for revenge, and to-morrow for mourning.”

Felicia Hemans, 1793-1835.

OH, ne'er be Clanronald the valiant forgot !
Still fearless and first in the combat he fell ;
But we paused not one tear-drop to shed o'er the spot,
We spared not one moment to murmur “ Farewell.”

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

We heard but the battle-word given by the chief,*
"To-day for revenge, and to-morrow for grief!"

And wildly, Clanronald! we echo'd the vow,
With the tear on our cheek, and the sword in our hand:
Young son of the brave! we may weep for the vow,
For well has thy death been avenged by thy band,
When they joined in wild chorus the cry of the chief,
"To-day for revenge, and to-morrow for grief!"

Thy dirge in that hour was the bugle's wild call,
The clash of the claymore, the shout of the brave;
But now thy own bard may lament for thy fall,
And the soft voice of melody sigh o'er thy grave—
While Albyn remembers the words of the chief,
"To-day for revenge, and to-morrow for grief!"

Thou art fallen, O fearless one! flower of thy race!
Descendant of heroes! thy glory is set:
But thy kindred, the sons of the battle and chase,
Have proved that thy spirit is bright in them yet!
Nor vainly have echoed the words of the chief,
"To-day for revenge, and to-morrow for grief!"

STAFFA.

John Keats, 1795-1821.

Nor Aladdin Magian
Ever such a work began;
Not the wizard of the Dee
Ever such a dream could see;

* Glengarry, who led on the clan at Sheriffmuir on the death of Clanronald.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Not St. John, in Patmos' Isle,
In the passion of his toil,
When he saw the churches seven,
Golden-aisled, built up in heaven,
Gazed at such a rugged wonder,
As I stood its roofing under.
Lo ! I saw one sleeping there,
On the marble cold and bare ;
While the surges washed his feet,
And his garments white did beat
Drench'd about the sombre rocks ;
On his neck his well-grown locks,
Lifted high above the main,
Were upon the curl again.
" What is this ? and what art thou ? "
Whisper'd I, and touch'd his brow ;
" What art thou ? and what is this ? "
Whispered I, and strove to kiss
The spirit's hand, to wake his eyes ;
Up he started in a trice :
" I am Lycidas," said he,
" Fam'd in funeral minstrelsy,
This was architected thus
By the great Oceanus !—
Here his mighty waters play
Hollow organs all the day ;
Here, by turns, his dolphins all,
Finny palmers, great and small,
Come to pay devotion due,—
Each a mouth of pearls must strew ;
Many a mortal of these days,
Dares to pass our sacred ways ;
Dares to touch audaciously,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

This Cathedral of the sea !
I have been the pontiff-priest,
Where the waters never rest,
Where the fledgy sea-bird choir
Soars for ever ! Holy fire
I have hid from mortal man ;
Proteus is my Sacristan !
But the dulled eye of mortal
Hath pass'd beyond the rocky portal :
So for ever will I leave
Such a taint, and soon unweave
All the magic of the place."
So saying, with a Spirit's glance
He dived !

THE CLANSMEN.

IMITATION OF A HIGHLAND BOAT SONG.

Dr. John MacLeod (of Morven), 1801-1882.

SEND the biorlinn on careering,
Cheerily and all together ;
Ho ro ! clansmen,
A long, strong pull together,
Ho ro ! clansmen.

Give her way, and show her wake,
Mid showering spray and curling eddies ;
Ho ro, etc.

Bend your oars and send her foaming
O'er the dark and glowing billows ;
Ho ro, etc.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Proudly o'er the wave we'll bound her,
As the stag-hound bounds the heather ;
Ho ro, etc.

Through the eddying tide we'll guide her,
Round each isle and breezy headland ;
Ho ro, etc.

See the diver as he eyes her,
Hides with wonder under water ;
Ho ro, etc.

The gannet high in midway sky,
Triumphs wildly as we're passing ;
Ho ro, etc.

The sportive sunbeams gleam around her,
As she bounds the shining water ;
Ho ro, etc.

Clansmen ! cheer, the wind is veering,
Soon she'll tear and cleave the billows ;
Ho ro, etc.

Soon the flowing breeze will blow,
We'll show the snowy canvas on her ;
Ho ro, etc.

Wafted by the breeze of morn
We'll quaff the joyous horn together ;
Ho ro, etc.

Another cheer ! our isle appears,
Our biorlinn bears her on the faster ;
Ho ro, etc.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Ahead she goes—our biorlinn knows
That eyes on shore are gazing on her ;
Ho ro, etc.

Ahead she goes—the land she knows,
Ho ro ! the snowy shores of Canna !
Ho ro, etc.

Ahead she goes—the land she knows,
Ho ro, ho ro, ho ro, we have it.
Ho ro, etc.

LAMENT FOR THE OLD HIGHLAND WARRIORS.

Robert Chambers, 1802-1871.

OH, where are the pretty men of yore ?
Oh, where are the brave men gone ?
Oh, where are the heroes of the north ?
Each under his own gray stone.
Oh, where now the broad bright claymore ?
Oh, where are the trews and plaid ?
Oh, where now the merry Highland heart ?
In silence for ever laid.

Och on a rie, och on a rie,
Och on a rie, all are gone ;
Och on a rie, the heroes of yore,
Each under his own gray stone.

The chiefs that were foremost of old,
Mac Donald and Brave Lochiel,
The Gordon, the Murray, and the Graham,
With their clansmen true as steel ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Who followed and fought with Montrose,
Glencairn and bold Dundee ;
Who to Charlie gave their swords and their all,
And would aye rather fa' than flee.
Och on a rie, etc.

The hills that our brave fathers trod
Are now to the stranger a store ;
The voice of the pipe and the bard
Shall waken never more.
Such things it is sad to think on—
They come like the mist by day—
And I wish I had less in this world to leave,
And be with them that are away.
Och on a rie, etc.

YOUNG DONALD.

George Allan, 1806-1835.

AN eiry night, a cheerless day,
A lanely hame at gloamin' hour,
When o'er the heart come thoughts o' wae,
Like shadows on Glenfillan's tower.
Is this the weird that I maun dree,
And a' around sae glad and gay,
Oh hon an righ, oh hon an righ,
Young Donald frae his love's away.

The winter snaw nae mair does fa',
The rose blooms in our mountain bower,
The wild flowers on the castle wa'
Are glintin' in the summer shower.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

But what are summer's smiles to me,
When he nae langer here could stay ;
Oh hon an righ, oh hon an righ,
Young Donald frae his love's away.

For Scotland's crown, and Charlie's right,
The fire-cross o'er our hills did flee,
And loyal swords were glancin' bright,
And Scotia's bluid was warm and free.
And though nae gleam of hope I see,
My prayer is for a brighter day :
Oh hon an righ, oh hon an righ,
Young Donald frae his love's away.

DUNOLLY CASTLE.

Thomas Brydson, 1806-1855.

THE breezes of this vernal day
Come whispering through thine empty hall,
And stir, instead of tapestry,
The weed upon its wall—

And bring from out the murmuring sea,
And bring from out the vocal wood,
The sound of nature's joy to thee,
Mocking thy solitude.

Yet, proudly 'mid the tide of years
Thou lift'st on high thine airy form—
Scene of primeval hopes and fears !
Slow yielding to the storm.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

From thy gray portal, oft at morn,
The ladies and the squires would go;
While swell'd the hunter's bugle-horn
In the green glen below.

And minstrel harp, at starry night,
Woke the high strain of battle here;
When with a wild and stern delight,
The warrior stoop'd to hear.

All fled for ever! leaving nought
Save lonely walls in ruin green,
Which dimly led my wandering thought
To moments that have been.

THE PIPES AT LUCKNOW.

John Greenleaf Whittier, 1807-1892.

PIPES of the misty moorlands,
Voice of the glens and hills;
The droning of the torrents,
The treble of the rills!
Not the braes of broom and heather,
Nor the mountains dark with rain,
Nor maiden bower, nor border tower,
Have heard your sweetest strain!

Dear to the Lowland reaper,
And plaided mountaineer—
To the cottage and the castle
The Scottish pipes are dear;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Sweet sounds the ancient pibroch
O'er mountain, loch, and glade ;
But the sweetest of all music
The pipes at Lucknow played.

Day by day the Indian tiger
Louder yelled and nearer crept ;
Round and round the jungle serpent
Near and nearer circles swept.
“ Pray for rescue, wives and mothers—
Pray to-day ! ” the soldier said ;
“ To-morrow, death's between us
And the wrong and shame we dread.”

Oh, they listened, looked, and waited,
Till their hope became despair ;
And the sobs of low bewailing
Filled the pauses of their prayer.
Then up spake a Scottish maiden,
With her ear unto the ground :
“ Dinna ye hear it ?—dinna ye hear it ?
The pipes of Havelock sound ! ”

Hushed the wounded man his groaning ;
Hushed the wife her little ones ;
Alone they heard the drum-roll
And the roar of Sepoy guns.
But to sounds of home and childhood
The Highland ear was true ;—
As her mother's cradle-crooning
The mountain pipes she knew.

Like the march of soundless music
Through the vision of the seer,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

More of feeling than of hearing,
Of the heart than of the ear,
She knew the droning pibroch,
She knew the Campbell's call :
" Hark ! hear ye no' Mac Gregor's—
The grandest o' them all ! "

Oh, they listened, dumb and breathless,
And they caught the sound at last ;
Faint and far beyond the Goomtee
Rose and fell the piper's blast !
Then a burst of wild thanksgiving
Mingled woman's voice and man's :
" God be praised !—the march of Havelock !
The piping of the Clans ! "

Louder, nearer, fierce as vengeance,
Sharp and shrill as swords at strife,
Came the wild Mac Gregor's clan-call,
Stinging all the air to life.
But when the far-off dust-cloud
To plaided legions grew,
Full tenderly and blithesomely
The pipes of rescue blew !

Round the silver domes of Lucknow,
Moslem mosque and Pagan shrine,
Breathed the air to Briton's dearest,
The air of Auld Lang Syne.
O'er that cruel roll of war-drums
Rose the sweet and homelike strain ;
And the tartan clove the turban,
As the Goomtee cleaves the plain.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Dear to the corn-land reaper
And plaided mountaineer—
To the cottage and the castle
The piper's song is dear.
Sweet sounds the Gaelic pibroch
O'er mountain, glen, and glade ;
But the sweetest of all music
The pipes at Lucknow played !

TO THE FALLING SNOW.

Evan Mac Coll, 1808-1898.

(The Bard of Loch Fyne.)

BRIGHT-ROBED pilgrim from the North !
Visitant of heavenly birth,
Welcome on thy journey forth—
Come, come, snow !

Light as fairy footsteps free,
Fall, oh fall ! I love to see
Earth thus beautified by thee.
Come, come, snow !

Silent as the flow of thought,
Gentle as a sigh love-fraught,
Welcome as a boon long sought,
Come, come, snow !

Let him boast of landscapes green,
Who no Highland vale hath seen,
Decked in thy resplendent sheen !
Come, come, snow !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Streamlets that to yonder tide
Gleam like silver as they glide,
Look like darkness thee beside :

Come, come, snow !

At thy touch, behold, to-day
The dark holly looks as gay
As the hawthorn does in May :

Come, come, snow !

Lo ! beneath thy gentle tread,
Fair as bride to altar led,
Bends the lady-birch her head :

Come, come, snow !

See how like a crystal column,
By yon lake so calmly solemn,
Towers magnificent the elm !

Come, come, snow !

Fields that late look'd bare and brown,
Fairer now than solan down,
Well maintain thy bright renown :

Come, come, snow !

Evening stealeth on apace—
Soon in all her virgin grace
Earth shall sleep in thy embrace !

Come, come, snow !

But enough—I fain would see
How the stars shall smilingly
Gaze upon the earth and thee :

Cease—cease now.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

A SUMMER MORNING AT DALMALIY.

Evan Mac Coll.

'Tis morn : the lark is up in heaven's blue,
Flooding the air with melody divine ;
A misty mantle made of morning dew
Half hides the valley in its silky shine.
The bleat of lambs, the low of milky kine,
Come to my gladden'd ears from strath and hill ;
The amorous blackbird in yon clump of pine
His feather'd harem rules with happy skill.
Here flows the winding Urchay, sweetly still,
As some fair fancy through a poet's brain ;
There lifts it up its voice with stronger will
In fitful chantings—to yon shepherd swain
A sign of rain, perhaps ere day is o'er—
To *me*, a music glorious evermore !

THE OLD SOLDIER OF THE GARELOCH- HEAD.

Professor John Stuart Blackie, 1809-1895.

I've wander'd east and west,
And a soldier I hae been ;
The scars upon my breast
Tell the wars that I have seen.
But now I'm old and worn,
And my locks are thinly spread,
And I'm come to die in peace,
By the Garelochhead.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

When I was young and strong,
Oft a wandering I would go,
By the rough shores of Loch Long,
Up to lone Glencroe.
But now I'm fain to rest,
And my resting place I've made,
On the green and gentle bosom
Of the Garelochhead.

'Twas here my Jeanie grew,
Like a lamb amid the flocks,
With her eyes of bonnie blue,
And her gowden locks.
And here we often met,
When with lightsome foot we sped,
O'er the green and grassy knolls
At the Garelochhead.

Like a leaf in leafy June,
From the leafy forest torn,
She fell, and I'll fall soon
Like a sheaf of yellow corn.
For I'm sere and weary now,
And I soon shall make my bed
With my Jeanie 'neath the turf
At the Garelochhead.

THE SONG OF THE HIGHLAND RIVER.

Professor John Stuart Blackie.

DEW-FED am I
With drops from the sky,
Where the white cloud rests on the old grey hill ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Slowly I creep
Down the precipice steep,
Where the snow through the summer lies freezingly still ;
Where the wreck of the storm
Lies shattered enorm,
I steal 'neath the stone with a tremulous rill ;
My low trickling flow
You may hear, as I go
Down the sharp-furrowed brow of the old grey hill,
Or drink from my well,
Grass-grown where I dwell,
In the clear granite cell of the old grey hill,
In the hollow of the hill
With my waters I fill
The little black tarn where the thin mist floats ;
The deep old moss
Slow-oozing I cross,
When the lapwing cries with its long shrill notes ;
Then fiercely I rush to the sharp granite edge,
And leap with a bound o'er the old grey ledge ;
Like snow in the gale,
I drive down the vale,
Lashing the rocks with my foamy flail ;
Where the black crags frown,
I pour sheer down,
Into the caldron boiling and brown ;
Whirling and eddying there I lie,
Where the old hawk wheels, and the blast howls by.

From the treeless brae
All green and grey,
To the wooded ravine I wind my way,
Dashing, and foaming, and leaping with glee,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

The child of the mountain wild and free.
Under the crag where the stone-crop grows,
Fringing with gold my shelvy bed,
 Where over my head
 Its fruitage of red,
The rock-rooted rowan tree blushfully shows,
 I wind, till I find
 A way to my mind,
While hazel, and oak, and the light ash tree,
Weave a green awning of leafage for me.
 Fitfully, fitfully, on I go,
Leaping, or running, or winding slow,
Till I come to the linn where my waters rush,
Eagerly down with a broad-faced gush,
 Foamingly, foamingly, white as the snow,
 On to the soft green turf below ;
Where I sleep with the lake as it sleeps in the glen,
'Neath the far-stretching base of the high-peaked Ben.

 Slowly and smoothly my winding I make,
Round the dark-wooded islets that stud the clear lake ;
 The green hills sleep
 With their beauty in me,
 Their shadows the light clouds
 Fling as they flee,
While in my pure waters pictured I glass
The light-plumed birches that nod as I pass.
 Slowly and silently on I wend,
 With many a bay and many a bend,
Luminous seen like a silvery line,
Shimmering bright in the fair sunshine,
Till I come to the pass, where the steep red scaur
Gleams like a watch-fire seen from afar,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Then out I ride,
With a full-rolling pride,
While my floods like the amber shine ;
Where the salmon rejoice
To hear my voice,
And the angler trims his line.

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BONNIE STRATHNAVER.

Professor John Stuart Blackie.

BONNIE Strathnaver ! Sutherland's pride,
With thy stream softly flowing, and mead spreading
wide ;

Bonnie Strathnaver, where now are the men
Who peopled with gladness thy green-mantled glen ?
Bonnie Strathnaver !

Bonnie Strathnaver ! Sutherland's pride,
Sweet is the breath of the birks on thy side ;
But where is the blue smoke that curled from the glen,
When thy lone hills were dappled with dwellings of men ?
Bonnie Strathnaver !

Bonnie Strathnaver ! O tearful to tell
Are the harsh deeds once done in thy bonnie green dell,
When to rocks of the cold blastful ocean were driven
The men on thy green turfy wilds who had thriven,
Bonnie Strathnaver !

When the lusty-thewed lad, and the light-tripping maid,
Looked their last on the hills where their infancy
strayed,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

When the grey, drooping sire, and the old hirpling dame
Were chased from their hearths by the fierce-spreading
flame,

Bonnie Strathnaver !

Bonnie Strathnaver ! Sutherland's pride,
Wide is the ruin that's spread on thy side ;
The bramble now climbs o'er the old ruined wall,
And the green fern is rank in the tenantless hall,

Bonnie Strathnaver !

Bonnie Strathnaver ! Sutherland's pride,
Loud is the baa of the sheep on thy side,
But the pipe and the song, and the dance are no more,
And gone the brave clansmen who trod thy green floor,

Bonnie Strathnaver !

Bonnie Strathnaver ! Sutherland's pride,
Vain are the tears which I weep on thy side ;
The praise of the bard is the meed of the glen,
But where is the charm that can bring back the men
To Bonnie Strathnaver ?

BEN GREIG.

Professor John Stuart Blackie.

WHY climb the mountains ? I will tell thee why,
And, if my fancy jumps not with thy whim,
What marvel ? there is scope beneath the sky
For things that creep, and fly, and walk, and swim.
I love the free breath of the broad-wing'd breeze,
I love the eye's free sweep from craggy rim,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

I love the free bird poised at lofty ease,
And the free torrents' far-upounding hymn;
I love to leave my littleness behind,
In the low vale where little cares are great,
And in the mighty map of things to find
A sober measure of my scanty state,
Taught by the vastness of God's pictured plan
In the big world how small a thing is man!

"DINNA YE HEAR IT?"

Alexander Mac Lagan, 1811-1879.

'Mid the thunder of battle, the groans of the dying,
The wail of weak women, the shouts of brave men,
A poor Highland maiden sat sobbing and sighing,
As she longed for the peace of her dear native glen.
But there came a glad voice to the ear of her heart,
The foes of auld Scotland for ever will fear it,
"We are saved! we are saved!" cried the brave High-
land maid,

"'Tis the Highlander's slogan! O dinna ye hear it?"

Dinna ye hear it? dinna ye hear it?

High o'er the battle's din, dinna ye hear it?

High o'er the battle's din, hail it and cheer it!

"'Tis the Highlanders' slogan! O dinna ye hear
it?"

A moment the tempest of battle was hushed,
But no tidings of help did that moment reveal;
Again to their shot-shattered ramparts they rushed—
Again roared the cannon, again flashed the steel!

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Still the Highland maiden cried, " Let us welcome the
brave !

The death-mists are thick, but their claymores will
clear it !

The war-pipes are pealing 'The Campbells are coming !'
They are charging and cheering ! O dinna ye hear
it ? "

Dinna ye hear it ? dinna ye hear it ? etc.

Ye heroes of Lucknow, fame crowns you with glory ;
Love welcomes you home with glad songs in your
praise ;

And brave Jessie Brown, with her soul-stirring story,
For ever will live in the Highlanders' lays.
Long life to our Queen, and the hearts who defend
her !

Success to our flag ! and when danger is near it,

May our pipes be heard playing "The Campbell's
are coming ! "

And an angel voice crying, " O dinna ye hear it ? "
Dinna ye hear it ? dinna ye hear it ? etc.

" WE'LL HA'E NANE BUT HIGHLAND BONNETS HERE. "

Inscribed to Sir Colin Campbell.

Alexander Mac Lagan.

ALMA, field of heroes, hail !
Alma, glorious to the Gael !
Glorious to the symbol dear,
Glorious to the mountaineer.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Hark, hark to Campbell's battle-cry !
It led the brave to victory ;
It thundered through the charging cheer,
We'll ha'e nane but Highland bonnets here !
We'll ha'e nane but Highland bonnets here !
We'll ha'e nane but Highland bonnets here !
It thundered through the charging cheer,
We'll ha'e nane but Highland bonnets here !

See, see the height where fight the brave !
See, see the gallant tartans wave !
How wild the work of Highland steel,
When conquered thousands backward reel.
See, see the warriors of the North,
To death or glory rushing forth !
Hark to their shout from front to rear,
We'll ha'e nane but Highland bonnets here !
We'll ha'e nane but Highland bonnets here ! etc.

Braver field was never won,
Braver deeds were never done ;
Braver blood was never shed,
Braver chieftain never led ;
Braver swords were never wet
With life's red tide when heroes met !
Braver words ne'er thrilled the ear,
We'll ha'e nane but Highland bonnets here !
We'll ha'e nane but Highland bonnets here ! etc.

Let glory rear her flag of fame,
Brave Scotland cries, " This spot I claim ! "
Here will Scotland bare her brand,
Here will Scotland's lion stand !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Here will Scotland's banner fly,
Here Scotland's sons will do or die !
Here shout above the "symbol dear" :
We'll ha'e nane but Highland bonnets here !
We'll ha'e nane but Highland bonnets here ! etc.

DANCE, MY CHILDREN !

Dr. Norman MacLeod, 1812-1872.

"DANCE, my children ! lads and lasses !
Cut and shuffle, toes and heels !
Piper, roar from every chanter
Hurricanes of Highland reels !

"Make the old barn shake with laughter,
Beat its flooring like a drum,
Batter it with Tullochgorum,
Till the storm without is dumb !

"Sweep in circles like a whirlwind,
Flit across like meteors glancing ;
Crack your fingers, shout in gladness,
Think of nothing but of dancing !"

Thus a gray-haired father speaketh,
As he claps his hands and cheers ;
Yet his heart is quietly dreaming,
And his eyes are dimmed with tears.

Well he knows this world of sorrow,
Well he knows this world of sin,
Well he knows the race before them,
What's to lose, and what's to win !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

But he hears a far-off music
Guiding all the stately spheres—
In his father-heart it echoes,
So he claps his hands and cheers.

SUNDAY IN THE HIGHLANDS.

Dr. Norman MacLeod.

WHAT holy calm is this! The mountains sleep,
Wrapped in the sun-mist, through which heaven-
born gleams

Kiss their old foreheads till they smile in dreams
Of early youth, when rising from the deep.

Baptised by God, they shared man's sinless days:—
Dreams, too, of Restoration, when shall cease
Creation's groans in universal peace,
And harmonies of universal praise.

But hark! From yonder glen the kirk-bell rings,
Where lambs at play 'midst purple heather bleat,
And larks make glad the air; while shepherds meet
To worship Christ. Good Lord! Thy world now sings
The hymn that louder yet shall fill the sky,
Of "Peace on earth! Glory to God on high!"

LAMENT FOR GLENCOE.

Mary Maxwell Campbell, 1813-1886.

YE loyal Macdonalds, awaken! awaken!
Why sleep ye so soundly in face of the foe?
The clouds pass away, and the morning is breaking,
But when will awaken the sons of Glencoe?

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

They lay down to rest with their thoughts on the
morrow,

Nor dreamt that life's visions were melting like snow ;
But daylight has dawned on the silence of sorrow,
And ne'er shall awaken the sons of Glencoe.

Oh, dark was the moment that brought to our shealing
The black-hearted foe with his treacherous smile :
We gave him our food with a brother's own feeling,
For then we believed there was truth in Argyle.
The winds howl a warning, the red lightning flashes,
We heap up our faggots a welcome to show ;
But traitors are brooding on death near the ashes—
How cold on the hearths of the sons of Glencoe.

My clansmen, strike boldly—let none of you count on
The mercy of cowards, who wrought us such woe ;
The wail of their spirits when heard on the mountain,
Must surely awaken the sons of Glencoe.
Oh, cruel as adders ! ye stung them while sleeping,
But vengeance shall track ye wherever ye go !
Our loved ones lie murdered—no sorrow nor weeping
Shall ever awaken the sons of Glencoe.

THE BURIAL MARCH OF DUNDEE.

William Edmonstoune Aytoun, D.C.L., 1813-1865.

I.

SOUND the fife, and cry the slogan—
Let the pibroch shake the air
With its wild triumphal music,
Worthy of the freight we bear.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Let the ancient hills of Scotland
Hear once more the battle-song
Swell within their glens and valleys,
As the clansmen march along !
Never from the field of combat,
Never from the deadly fray,
Was a nobler trophy carried,
Than we bring with us to-day—
Never, since the valiant Douglas
On his dauntless bosom bore
Good King Robert's heart—the priceless—
To our dear Redeemer's shore !
Lo ! we bring with us the hero—
Lo ! we bring the conquering Græme,
Crowned as best beseems a victor
From the altar of his fame ;
Fresh and bleeding from the battle
Whence his spirit took its flight,
Midst the crashing charge of squadrons,
And the thunder of the fight !
Strike, I say, the notes of triumph,
As we march o'er moor and lea !
Is there any here will venture
To bewail our dead Dundee ?
Let the widows of the traitors
Weep until their eyes are dim !
Wail ye may full well for Scotland—
Let none dare to mourn for him !
See ! above his glorious body
Lies the royal banner's fold—
See ! his valiant blood is mingled
With its crimson and its gold—

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

See how calm he looks, and stately,
Like a warrior on his shield,
Waiting till the flush of morning
Breaks along the battle-field !
See—Oh never more, my comrades,
Shall we see that falcon eye
Redden with its inward lightning,
As the hour of fight drew nigh !
Never shall we hear the voice that,
Clearer than the trumpet's call,
Bade us strike for King and Country,
Bade us win the field, or fall !

II.

On the heights of Killiecrankie
Yester-morn our army lay :
Slowly rose the mist in columns
From the river's broken way ;
Hoarsely roared the swollen torrent
And the Pass was wrapt in gloom,
When the clansmen rose together
From their lair amidst the broom.
Then we belted on our tartans,
And our bonnets down we drew,
And we felt our broadswords' edges,
And we proved them to be true ;
And we prayed the prayer of soldiers,
And we cried the gathering-cry,
And we clasped the hands of kinsmen,
And we swore to do or die !
Then our leader rode before us
On his war-horse black as night—

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Well the Cameronian rebels
Knew that charger in the fight !—
And a cry of exultation
From the bearded warriors rose ;
For we loved the house of Claver'se,
And we thought of good Montrose.
But he raised his hand for silence—
“Soldiers ! I have sworn a vow :
Ere the evening star shall glisten
On Schehallion's lofty brow,
Either we shall rest in triumph,
Or another of the Græmes
Shall have died in battle-harness
For his country and King James !
Think upon the Royal Martyr—
Think of what his race endure—
Think of him whom butchers murdered
On the field of Magus Muir—
By his sacred blood I charge ye,
By the ruined hearth and shrine—
By the blighted hopes of Scotland,
By your injuries and mine—
Strike this day as if the anvil
Lay beneath your blows the while,
Be they covenanting traitors,
Or the brood of false Argyle !
Strike ! and drive the trembling rebels
Backwards o'er the stormy Forth ;
Let them tell their pale Convention
How they fared within the North.
Let them tell that Highland honour
Is not to be bought nor sold,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

That we scorn their prince's anger
As we loathe his foreign gold.
Strike! and when the fight is over,
If ye look in vain for me,
Where the dead are lying thickest,
Search for him that was Dundee!"

III.

Loudly then the hills re-echoed
With our answer to his call,
But a deeper echo sounded
In the bosoms of us all.

.

Soon we heard a challenge-trumpet
Sounding in the Pass below,
And the distant tramp of horses,
And the voices of the foe :
Down we crouched amid the bracken,
Till the Lowland ranks drew near,
Panting like the hounds in summer,
When they scent the stately deer.
From the dark defile emerging,
Next we saw the squadrons come,
Leslie's foot and Leven's troopers
Marching to the tuck of drum ;
Through the scattered wood of birches,
O'er the broken ground and heath,
Wound the long battalion slowly
Till they gained the plain beneath ;
Then we bounded from our covert :—
Judge how looked the Saxons then,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

When they saw the rugged mountain
Start to life with armèd men !
Like a tempest down the ridges
Swept a hurricane of steel,
Rose the Slogan of Macdonald—
Flashed the broadsword of Lochiel !
Vainly sped the withering volley
'Mongst the foremost of our band—
On we poured until we met them,
Foot to foot, and hand to hand.
Horse and man went down like drift-wood
When the floods are black at Yule,
And their carcasses are whirling
In the Garry's deepest pool.
Horse and man went down before us—
Living foe there tarried none
On the field of Killiecrankie,
When the stubborn fight was done !

IV.

And the evening star was shining
On Schehallion's distant head,
When we wiped our bloody broadswords,
And returned to count the dead.
There we found him gashed and gory,
Stretched upon the cumbered plain,
As he told us where to seek him,
In the thickest of the slain.
And a smile was on his visage,
For within his dying ear
Pealed the joyful note of triumph,
And the clansmen's clamorous cheer :

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

So, amidst the battle's thunder,
Shot, and shell, and scorching flame,
In the glory of his manhood
Passed the spirit of the Græme !

v.

Open wide the vaults of Athol,
Where the bones of heroes rest—
Open wide the hallowed portals
To receive another guest !
Last of Scots, and last of freemen—
Last of all that dauntless race,
Who would rather die unsullied,
Than outlive the land's disgrace !
O thou lion-hearted warrior !
Reck not of the after-time :
Honour may be deemed dishonour,
Loyalty be called a crime.
Sleep in peace with kindred ashes
Of the noble and the true,
Hands that never failed their country,
Hearts that never baseness knew.
Sleep ! — and till the latest trumpet
Wakes the dead from earth and sea,
Scotland shall not boast a braver
Chieftain than our own Dundee !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

THE CLANSMAN'S REVENGE.

A LEGEND OF LOCH BUY.

Dr. Charles Mac Kay, 1814-1889.

I.

"MAC LAINE, you've scourged me like a hound !
You should have struck me to the ground ;
You should have played a chieftain's part—
You should have stabbed me to the heart ;

II.

"You should have crushed me into death !
But here I swear, with living breath,
That for the wrong which you have done
I'll take my vengeance on your son—

III.

"On him, and you, and all your race !"
He said, and bounding from the place,
He seized the child with sudden hold—
A smiling infant three years old.

IV.

And, starting like a hunted stag,
He scaled the rock, he clomb the crag,
And reached o'er many a wide abyss
The beetling seaward precipice.

V.

And leaning o'er its topmost ledge,
He held the infant o'er the edge.
"In vain thy wrath, thy sorrow vain,
No hand shall save it, proud Mac Laine !"

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

VI.

With flashing eye and burning brow
The mother followed, heedless how,
O'er crags with mosses overgrown,
And stair-like juts of slippery stone.

VII.

But midway up the rugged steep,
She found a chasm she could not leap,
And, kneeling on its brink, she raised
Her supplicating hands, and gazed.

VIII.

"Oh, spare my child, my joy, my pride ;
Oh, give me back my child !" she cried ;
"My child ! my child !" with sobs and tears
She shrieked upon his callous ears.

IX.

"Come, Evan," said the trembling chief,
His bosom wrung with pride and grief,
"Restore the boy, give back my son,
And I'll forgive the wrong you've done."

X.

"I scorn forgiveness, haughty man !
You've injured me before the clan,
And nought but blood shall wipe away
The shame I have endured to-day."

XI.

And as he spoke he raised the child,
To dash it 'mid the breakers wild,
But at the mother's piercing cry
Drew back a step and made reply :

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

XII.

"Fair lady, if your lord will strip,
And let a clansman wield the whip,
Till skin shall flay and blood shall run,
I'll give you back your little son."

XIII.

The lady's cheeks grew pale with ire,
The chieftain's eyes flashed sudden fire;
He drew a weapon from his breast,
Took aim, then dropt it sore distrest.

XIV.

"I might have slain my babe instead.
Come, Evan, come," the father said,
And through his heart a tremor ran;
"We'll fight our quarrel man to man."

XV.

"Wrong unavenged I've never borne,"
Said Evan, speaking loud in scorn;
"You've heard my answer, proud Mac Laine,
I will not fight you—think again!"

XVI.

The lady stood in mute despair,
With freezing blood and stiffening hair;
She moved no limb, she spoke no word,
She could but look upon her lord.

XVII.

He saw the quivering of her eye,
Pale lips, and speechless agony—
And doing battle with his pride,
"Give back the boy—I yield," he cried.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

XVIII.

A storm of passion shook his mind,
Anger, and shame, and love combined ;
But love prevailed, and, bending low,
He bared his shoulders to the blow.

XIX.

"I smite you," said the clansman true ;
"Forgive me, chief, the deed I do !
For by yon Heaven that hears me speak,
My dirk in Evan's heart shall reek."

XX.

But Evan's face beamed hate and joy ;
Close to his breast he hugged the boy ;
"Revenge is just ! revenge is sweet !
And mine, Loch Buy, shall be complete."

XXI.

Ere hand could stir, with sudden shock
He threw the infant o'er the rock ;
Then followed with a desperate leap,
Down fifty fathoms to the deep.

XXII.

They found their bodies in the tide ;
And never till the day she died
Was that sad mother known to smile ;—
The Niobe of Mulla's Isle.

XXIII.

They dragged false Evan from the sea,
And hanged him on a gallows tree ;
And ravens fattened on his brain,
To sate the vengeance of Mac Laine.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

THE KELPIE OF CORRIEVRECKAN.

Dr. Charles Mac Kay.

I.

HE mounted his steed of the water clear,
And sat on his saddle of sea-weed sere ;
He held his bridle of strings of pearl,
Dug out of the depths where the sea-snakes curl.

II.

He put on his vest of the whirlpool froth,
Soft and dainty as velvet cloth,
And donned his mantle of sand so white,
And grasped his sword of the coral bright.

III.

And away he galloped, a horseman free,
Spurring his steed through the stormy sea,
Clearing the billows with bound and leap—
Away, away, o'er the foaming deep !

IV.

By Scarba's rock, by Lunga's shore,
By Garveloch isles where the breakers roar,
With his horse's hoofs he dashed the spray,
And on to Loch Buy, away, away !

V.

On to Loch Buy all day he rode,
And reached the shore as sunset glowed,
And stopped to hear the sounds of joy
That rose from the hills and glens of Moy.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

VI.

The morrow was May, and on the green
They'd lit the fire of Beltan E'en,
And danced around, and piled it high
With peat and heather and pine-logs dry.

VII.

A piper played a lightsome reel,
And timed the dance with toe and heel ;
While wives looked on, as lad and lass
Trod it merrily o'er the grass.

VIII.

And Jessie (fickle and fair was she)
Sat with Evan beneath a tree,
And smiled with mingled love and pride,
And half agreed to be his bride.

IX.

The Kelpie galloped o'er the green—
He seemed a knight of noble mien,
And old and young stood up to see,
And wondered who the knight could be.

X.

His flowing locks were auburn bright,
His cheeks were ruddy, his eyes flashed light ;
And as he sprang from his good grey steed,
He looked a gallant youth indeed.

XI.

And Jessie's fickle heart beat high
As she caught the stranger's glancing eye ;
And when he smiled, " Ah well," thought she,
" I wish this knight came courting me ! "

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

XII.

He took two steps towards her seat—
“Wilt thou be mine, O maiden sweet?”
He took her lily-white hand, and sighed,
“Maiden, maiden, be my bride?”

XIII.

And Jessie blushed, and whispered soft—
“Meet me to-night when the moon’s aloft;
I’ve dreamed, fair knight, long time of thee—
I thought thou camest courting me.”

XIV.

When the moon her yellow horn displayed,
Alone to the trysting went the maid;
When all the stars were shining bright,
Alone to the trysting went the knight.

XV.

“I have loved thee long, I have loved thee well,
Maiden, oh more than words can tell!
Maiden, thine eyes like diamonds shine:
Maiden, maiden, be thou mine!”

XVI.

“Fair sir, thy suit I’ll ne’er deny—
Though poor my lot my hopes are high;
I scorn a lover of low degree—
None but a knight shall marry me.”

XVII.

He took her by the hand so white,
And gave her a ring of the gold so bright;
“Maiden, whose eyes like diamonds shine—
Maiden, maiden, now thou’rt mine!”

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

XVIII.

He lifted her up on his steed of grey,
And they rode till morning away, away—
Over the mountain and over the moor,
And over the rocks, to the dark seashore.

XIX.

“We have ridden east, we have ridden west—
I’m weary, fair knight, and I fain would rest.
Say is thy dwelling beyond the sea?
Has thou a good ship waiting for me?”

XX.

“I have no dwelling beyond the sea,
I have no good ship waiting for thee:
Thou shalt sleep with me on a couch of foam,
And the depths of the ocean shall be thy home.”

XXI.

The grey steed plunged in the billows clear,
And the maiden’s shrieks were sad to hear.
“Maiden, whose eyes like diamonds shine,
Maiden, maiden, now thou’rt mine!”

XXII.

Loud the cold sea-blast did blow,
As they sank ’mid the angry waves below—
Down to the rocks where the serpents creep,
Twice five hundred fathoms deep.

XXIII.

At morn a fisherman sailing by
Saw her pale corse floating high:
He knew the maid by her yellow hair
And her lily skin so soft and fair.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

XXIV.

Under a rock on Scarba's shore,
Where the wild winds sigh and the breakers roar,
They dug her a grave by the water clear,
Among the sea-weed salt and sere.

XXV.

And every year at Beltan E'en,
The Kelpie gallops across the green
On a steed as fleet as the wintry wind,
With Jessie's mournful ghost behind.

XXVI.

I charge you, maids, who'er you be,
Conquer your pride and vanity ;
And ere on change of love you reckon,
Beware the Kelpie of Corrievreckan.

THE SACRAMENTAL SABBATH.

From "Kilmahoe." *

Professor John Campbell Shairp, 1819-1885.

Up the long glen narrowing
Inland from the eastern deep,
In the kirkyard o'er the river,
Where dead generations sleep,
Living men on summer Sabbaths
Worship long have loved to keep.

.

* Kildalloig, a mansion-house on the south horn of Campbeltown Bay, is the original of "Kilmahoe."

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Lulled the sea this Sabbath morning,
Calm the golden misted glens,
And the white clouds upward passing,
Leave unveiled the azure Bens,
Altars pure to lift to heaven
Human hearts' unheard amens.

And the folk in streams are flowing
Both from near and far, enticed
By old wont and reverent feeling
Here to keep the hallowed tryst,
This calm sacramental Sabbath,
Far among the hills, with Christ.

.
You might see on old white horses
Aged farmers slowly ride,
With their wives behind them seated,
And the collie by their side ;
While the young folk follow after,
Son and daughter, groom and bride.

There a boat or two is coming
From lone isle or headland o'er,
Many more, each following other,
Slowly pull along the shore,
Fore and aft to gunwale freighted
With the old, the weak, the poor.

.
Here on green mound sits a widow,
Rocking—crooning—to and fro,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Over him with whom so gladly
To God's house she used to go ;
There the tears of wife and husband
Blend o'er a small grave below.

.

Sweet the chime from ruined belfry
Stealeth ; at its peaceful call
Round the knoll whereon the preacher
Takes his stand, they gather all :
In whole families seated, o'er them
Hallowed stillness seems to fall.

There they sit, the men bareheaded
By their wives ; in reverence meek
Many an eye to heaven is lifted,
Many lips, not heard to speak,
Mutely moving, on their worship
From on high a blessing seek.

Some on gray-mossed headstones seated,
Some on mounds of wild thyme balm,
Grave-browed men and tartaned matrons
Swell the mighty Celtic psalm,
On from glen to peak repeated,
Far into the mountain calm.

Then the agèd pastor rose,
White with many a winter's snows
Fallen o'er his ample brows ;
And his voice of pleading prayer,
Cleaving slow the still blue air,
All his people's needs laid bare.

.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Slow the people round the table
Outspread, white as mountain sleet,
Gather, the blue heaven above them,
And their dead beneath their feet ;
There in perfect reconciliation
Death and life immortal meet.

Noiseless round that fair white table
'Mid their fathers' tombstones spread,
Hoary-headed elders moving,
Bear the hallowed wine and bread,
While devoutly still the people
Low in prayer bow the head.

.

Soon they go—but ere another
Day of hallowed bread and wine,
Some now here shall have ascended
To communion more divine,
Some have changed their old hill-dwellings,
Some have swept the tropic line.

CLEARANCE SONG.

From "Kilmahoe."

Professor John Campbell Shairp.

FROM Loch Houra to Glenfinnan the grey mountains
ranging,
Naught falls on the eye but the changed and the
changing,
From the hut by the lochside, the farm by the river,
Macdonalds and Camerons pass—and forever.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

The flocks of one stranger the long glens are roaming,
Where a hundred bien homesteads smoked bonny at
gloaming,

Our wee crofts run wild wi' the bracken and heather,
And our gables stand ruinous, bare to the weather.

To the green mountain shealings went up in old
summers

From farm-toun and clachan how many blithe comers !
Though green the hill pastures lie, cloudless the
heaven,

No milker is singing there, morning or even.

Where high Mam-clach-ard by the beallach is breasted,
Ye may see the grey cairns where old funerals rested,
They who built them have long in their green graves
been sleeping,

And their sons gone to exile, or willing or weeping.

The Chiefs, whom for ages our claymores defended,
Whom landless and exiled our fathers befriended,
From their homes drive their clansmen when famine is
sorest,

Cast out to make room for the deer of the forest.

Yet on far fields of fame, when the red ranks were
reeling,

Who prest to the van like the men from the shealing ?
Ye were fain in your need Highland broadswords to
borrow,

Where, where are they now, should the foe come
to-morrow ?

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Alas for the day of the mournful Culloden !
The clans from that hour down to dust have been
trodden ;
They were leal to their Prince, when red wrath was
pursuing,
And have reaped in return but oppression and ruin.

It is plaintive in harvest, when lambs are a-spaining,
To hear the hills loud with ewe-mothers complaining—
Ah ! sadder that cry comes from mainland and islands,
The sons of the Gael have no home in the Highlands.

THE MOURNING OF THE GAEL.

Dora Greenwell, 1821-1882.

IN *The Fair Maid of Perth* Sir Walter Scott writes thus :—

“The usual aversion to think and speak of those who have been beloved and lost is less known to this grave and enthusiastic race than it is to others. . . . The Scottish Highlanders appear to regard the separation of friends by Death as something less absolute and complete than it is generally esteemed in other countries ; and converse of the dear connexions who have sought the grave before them, as if they had gone upon a long journey, on which they themselves must soon follow.”

I.

“YE weep not o’er your loved ones as we weep—
Sons of the rock-bound glen and mountain lone !
Your calm and steadfast spirits may not own
The touch of weakness ; yet can Memory sleep
With folded wings where Love was once so deep ?
We stand upon our silent hearths alone,
Peopling the gloom with faces that are gone,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

While with our hearts we sad communion keep :
But ye around the board where friends are met
Give open greeting to your fellow-men ;
With steady voice and earnest eyes unwet,
Ye speak of *Them*—the vanished ! as if then,
Their smile made sunshine round you ; as if yet
The silent voice might answer yours again !”

II.

“ We speak of them because we love them well.
They have not left us ! and we shed no tear
That they are with us still—more pure, more dear !
Our hearts have not yet learned to say farewell !
Their voices died not for us in the knell
That told us they were gone ! When none are near,
They speak to us through rustling branches sere,
As our old pines give back the wild wind's swell—
And voices from the happy Past have spoken
In tales they loved, in songs they used to sing :
As other friends depart, they bear a token,
An earnest of the Faith to which we cling,
That the bright chain of Love is strained, not broken ;
And comfort comes with our remembering.”

THE CHIEFTAIN'S CORONACH.

(Edinburgh, September, 1866.)

Sir Noel Paton, 1821-1901.

FAR from his mountain-peaks and moorlands brown,
Far from the rushing thunder of the Spey,
Amid the din and turmoil of the town
A Highland chieftain on his death-bed lay ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Dying in pride of manhood, ere to grey
One lock had turned, or from his eagle face
And stag-like form Time's touch of slow decay
Had reft the strength and beauty of his race :
And as the feverish night drew sadly on,
" Music ! " they heard him breathe, in low beseeching
tone.

From where beside his couch she weeping leant,
Uprose the fair-haired daughter of his love,
And touched with tremulous hand the instrument,
Singing, with tremulous voice that vainly strove
To still its faltering, songs that wont to move
His heart to mirth in many a dear home-hour ;
But not to-night thy strains, sweet, sorrowing dove,
To fill the hunger of his heart have power !
And hark ! he calls, aloud, with kindling eye,
" Ah ! might I hear a pibroch once before I die ! "

Was it the gathering silence of the grave
Lent ghostly prescience to his yearning ear ?
Was it the pitying God who heard, and gave
Swift answer to his heart's wild cry ? For clear,
Though far, but swelling nearer and more near,
Sounded the mighty war-pipe of the Gaël
Upon the night wind ! In his eye a tear
Of sadness gleamed ; but flusht his visage pale
With the old martial rapture. On his bed
They raised him. When it past—the Mountaineer was
dead !

Yet ere it past, ah ! doubt not he was borne
Away in spirit to the ancestral home

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Beyond the Grampians, where, in life's fresh morn,
He scaled the crag and stemmed the torrent's foam ;
Where the lone corrie he was wont to roam,
A light-foot hunter of the deer ! But where,
Alas ! to-day, beneath the cloudless dome
Of this blue autumn heaven, the clansmen bear
His ashes, with the coronach's piercing knell,
To sleep amid the wilds he loved in life so well.

LEGEND OF THE CORRIEVRECHAN.

Dr. George Mac Donald, 1824-1905.

PRINCE BREACAN of Denmark was lord of the strand,
And lord of the billowy sea ;
Lord of the sea and lord of the land,
He might have let maidens be !

A maiden he met with locks of gold,
Straying beside the sea :
Maidens listened in days of old,
And repented grievously.

Wiser he left her in evil wiles,
Went sailing over the sea ;
Came to the lord of the Western Isles :
Give me thy daughter, said he.

The lord of the Isles he laughed, and said :
Only a king of the sea
May think the Maid of the Isles to wed,
And such, men call not thee !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Hold thine own three nights and days
In yon whirlpool of the sea,
Or turn thy prow and go thy ways
And let the isle-maiden be.

Prince Breacan he turned his dragon prow
To Denmark over the sea :
Wise women, he said, now tell me how
In yon whirlpool to anchor me.

Make a cable of hemp and a cable of wool
And a cable of maidens' hair,
And hie thee back to the roaring pool
And anchor in safety there.

The smiths of Greydule, on the eve of Yule,
Will forge three anchors rare ;
The hemp thou shalt pull, thou shalt shear the wool,
And the maidens will bring their hair.

Of the hair that is brown thou shalt twist one strand,
Of the hair that is raven another ;
Of the golden hair thou shalt twine a band
To bind the one to the other !

The smiths of Greydule, on the eve of Yule,
They forged three anchors rare ;
The hemp he did pull, and he shore the wool,
And the maidens brought their hair.

He twisted the brown hair for one strand,
The raven hair for another ;
He twined the golden hair in a band
To bind the one to the other.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

He took the cables of hemp and wool,
He took the cable of hair,
He hied him back to the roaring pool,
He cast the three anchors there.

The whirlpool roared, and the day went by,
And night came down on the sea ;
But or ever the morning broke the sky
The hemp was broken in three.

The night it came down, the whirlpool it ran,
The wind it fiercely blew ;
And or ever the second morning began
The wool it parted in two.

The storm it roared all day the third,
The whirlpool wallowed about,
The night came down like a wild black bird,
But the cable of hair held out.

Round and round with a giddy swing
Went the sea-king through the dark ;
Round went the rope in the swivel-ring,
Round reeled the straining bark.

Prince Breacan he stood on his dragon prow,
A lantern in his hand :
Blest be the maidens of Denmark now,
By them shall Denmark stand !

He watched the rope through the tempest black,
A lantern in his hold :
Out, out, alack ! one strand will crack !
It is the strand of gold !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

The third morn clear and calm came out :
No anchored ship was there !
The golden strand in the cable stout
Was not all of maidens' hair.

IONA.

Dr. Walter C. Smith, 1824-1908.

LONE, green Isle of the West,
Where the monks, their coracle steering,
Could see no more, o'er the wave's white crest,
Their own loved home in Erin ;
Shrouded often in mist,
And buried in cloud and rain ;
Yet once by the light of a glory kissed,
Which nothing can dim again !

O'er tangled and shell-paved rocks
The white sea-gulls are flying ;
And in the sunny coves brown flocks
Of wistful seals are lying ;
The waves are breaking low,
Hardly their foam you trace ;
All hushed and still, as if they know
This is a sacred place.

The diving guillemot
Is preening his dappled feather ;
The great merganser shows his throat,
Red in this summer weather ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

And bathed in a tremulous light
Are minster, cross, and grave,
That call up the past with a spell of might,
To tell of the meek and brave.

No fitter day than this
To look on thy mystic beauty,
And brood on memories of the bliss
Of faith and love and duty,
Of the hours of quiet prayer,
Of the days of patient toil,
Of the love that always, and everywhere,
Burned like a holy oil.

O lone green Isle of the West,
So oft by the mist enshrouded,
I have seen thee to-day in thy quiet best,
Not noisily mobbed, and crowded,
Seen thee in flooding light,
Seen thee in perfect calm ;
Yet am I sad as at the sight
Of mummy that men embalm.

Isle of the past and gone,
The life from thee has departed ;
Thy best is now but a carven stone—
And a memory lonely-hearted !
Yet thou wert a power, erewhile,
O'er the great world's mind and heart ;
But where now the priests of the Holy Isle
And the skill of its graceful Art ?

Skilled was the hand that wrought
Your traceried tombs and crosses,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

And silvern brooches that yet are brought
From depths of the black peat mosses ;
And theirs was a holy work
Who carried the gospel pure
Where the white waves break by the old White kirk,
And brought salvation sure.

Was it the Norseman's sword,
And the ships of Thor and Odin
That drove the saints with the sacred Word
From the peaceful ways they trod in ?
Was it the Saxon's sway,
Brutal and selfish and strong,
That swept the beautiful Art away,
And stifled the Celtic song ?

Only this do we know,
The Celt brought light to the Teuton,
And ever the knowledge of God did grow
In the land he set his foot on ;
But as they throve he pined,
But as they smiled he sighed,
But as they grew he surely dwined,
And in their life he died.

O passion of holy love !
O sacrificial people,
Dying to lift men's thoughts above
By altar and cross and steeple !
Through stormy seas ye passed,
And moor and marsh and fen,
To be left behind in the march at last
As weak exhausted men !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

They say ye shall rise again
On the level western prairie,
With a larger life and a keener brain,
Like eagle out of his eyrie ;
But not the mind and the heart
That grew by the Lochs and Bens,
Nor the plaintive song and the mystic Art
Nursed in the rushy glens.

GLENARADALE.

Dr. Walter C. Smith.

THERE is no fire of the crackling boughs
On the hearth of our fathers,
There is no lowing of brown-eyed cows
On the green meadows,
Nor do the maidens whisper vows
In the still gloaming,
Glenaradale.

There is no bleating of sheep on the hill
Where the mists linger,
There is no sound of the low hand-mill
Ground by the women,
And the smith's hammer is lying still,
By the brown anvil,
Glenaradale.

Ah ! we must leave thee, and go away
Far from Ben Luibh,
Far from the graves where we hoped to lay
Our bones with our fathers,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Far from the kirk where we used to pray
 Lowly together,
 Glenaradale.

We are not going for hunger of wealth,
 For the gold and silver,
We are not going to seek for health
 On the flat prairies,
Nor yet for the lack of fruitful tilth
 On thy green pastures,
 Glenaradale.

Content with the croft and the hill were we,
 As all our fathers,
Content with the fish in the lake to be
 Carefully netted,
And garments spun of the wool from thee,
 O black-faced wether
 Of Glenaradale.

No father here but would give a son
 For the old country,
And his mother the sword would have girded on
 To fight her battles ;
Many's the battle that has been won
 By the brave tartans,
 Glenaradale.

But the big-horned stag and his hinds, we know,
 In the high corries,
And the salmon that swirls the pool below
 Where the stream rushes,
Are more than the hearts of men, and so
 We leave thy green valley,
 Glenaradale.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

SKYE.

Alexander Nicolson, LL.D., 1827-1893.

My heart is yearning to thee, O Skye !
Dearest of islands !
There first the sunshine gladdened my eye,
On the sea sparkling ;
There doth the dust of my dear ones lie,
In the old graveyard.

Bright are the golden green fields to me,
Here in the Lowlands ;
Sweet sings the mavis in the thorn-tree,
Snowy with fragrance :
But oh for a breath of the great North Sea,
Girdling the mountains !

Good is the smell of the brine that laves
Black rock and skerry,
Where the great palm-leaved tangle waves
Down in the green depths,
And round the craggy bluff, pierced with caves,
Sea-gulls are screaming.

Where the sun sinks beyond Hunish Head,
Swimming in glory,
As he goes down to his ocean bed
Studded with islands,
Flushing the Coolin with royal red,
Would I were sailing !

Many a hearth round that friendly shore
Giveth warm welcome ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Charms still are there, as in days of yore,
More than of mountains ;
But hearths and faces are seen no more,
Once of the brightest.

Many a poor black cottage is there,
Grimy with peat smoke,
Sending up in the soft evening air
Purest blue incense,
While the low music of psalm and prayer
Rises to heaven.

Kind were the voices I used to hear
Round such a fireside,
Speaking the mother tongue old and dear,
Making the heart beat
With endless tales of wonder and fear,
Or plaintive singing.

Great were the marvellous stories told
Of Ossian's heroes,
Giants, and witches, and young men bold,
Seeking adventures,
Winning king's daughters and guarded gold,
Only with valour.

Reared in these dwellings have brave ones been ;
Brave ones are still there ;
Forth from their darkness on Sunday I've seen
Coming pure linen,
And, like the linen, the souls were clean
Of them that wore it.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

See that thou kindly use them, O man !
To whom God giveth
Stewardship over them, in thy short span,
Not for thy pleasure ;
Woe be to them who choose for a clan
Four-footed people !

Blessings be with ye, both now and aye,
Dear human creatures !
Yours is the love that no gold can buy,
Nor time can wither.
Peace be to thee and thy children, O Skye !
Dearest of islands !

DEAR ISLAY.

Thomas Pattison, 1828-1865.

O ISLAY ! sweet Islay !
Thou green, grassy Islay !
Why, why art thou lying
So far o'er the sea ?
O Islay ! dear Islay !
Thy daylight is dying,
And here am I longing,
And longing for thee !

O Islay ! fair Islay !
Thou dear mother Islay !
Where my spirit, awaking,
First looked on the day.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

O Islay ! dear Islay !
That link of God's making
Must last, till I wing me
Away, and away !

Dear Islay ! good Islay !
Thou holy-soiled Islay !
My fathers are sleeping
Beneath thy green sod.
O Islay ! kind Islay !
Well, well be thou keeping
That dear dust awaiting
The great day of God.

Old Islay ! God bless thee,
Thou good mother, Islay !
Bless thy wide ocean !
And bless thy sweet lea !
And Islay, dear Islay !
My heart's best emotion,
For ever and ever
Shall centre in thee.

THE ISLESMAN'S HOME.

Thomas Pattison.

Know'st thou the land where the herd houseless strayed,
When Summer's night was but one gloaming shade—
Where still the billows roll in sunny gold,
And thousand moors their thousand waters hold—
Know'st thou that land ? The hardy Islesman's home,
Whence oft, alas ! an exile he must roam.

.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Know'st thou its hills, where wandering mists repose,
And bleach the rocks o'er which the heather grows ;
Whose warmest couch the grouse and blackcock share—
Those chartered denizens of earth and air—
Know'st thou its hills whence the eye glances free
Over the measureless and western sea ?

Know'st thou its lochs on which, when sunset's o'er,
The boat glides softly to the fragrant shore ;
While cattle bellow and the house-dogs bay,
And hamlet noises pass with light away—
Know'st thou its lochs ? On them night's sky-born
beam
Welcomes in peace the poorest taper's gleam.

THE HEBRIDEAN EXILE'S DREAM.

Henry Shanks, 1829-1911.

In my log dwelling in Canadian wild wood,
When through the pine trees moans the eerie wind,
My thoughts fly backward to my days of childhood,
To home and friends for ever left behind.
"Vast are the woods that gird this mighty river,"
And fair the pastures where the cattle roam,
But were they ten times fairer, they could never
Blot from my heart my native Highland home.

Chorus.

Land of the clansmen, true and loyal hearted ;
Land of the brave, the noble and the free ;
Land of my childhood, though for ever parted,
The exile's heart still fondly clings to thee.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

“ From the lone shieling on the misty island,
Mountains divide me, and a world of seas,
But still my heart is true—my heart is Highland,
And I in dreams behold the Hebrides.”

Where Scur-na-Gilleaen braves the wintry weather,
And round Ben More the howling tempest raves,
And where in glory blooms the purple heather,
There sleep my fathers in their island graves.

Oft in my dreams I roam my native mountains,
Chase the wild deer with all a hunter's pride ;
With rapture gaze on streams and sparkling fountains,
And view the shealing on the mountain's side.

I see the billows from the wild Atlantic
Come rolling on from coast of Labrador,
With proud, defiant crests, and fury frantic,
To break in foam upon the rock-bound shore.

I see the clansmen muster in the valley,
Hear the wild pibroch ringing through the glen ;

“ Again around Clan Ronald's banner rally
The fairest women and the bravest men.”

Round the turf fire I list the song and story
Of dangers braved by last of Stuart line,
And hear from aged sires the vanished glory
That clusters round Iona's sacred shrine.

“ Lovers once more upon the leas are meeting,
Children once more are paddling in the stream,”

Among the clifly rocks the goats are bleating,
And old friends gather round me in my dreams.
But with the waking comes the thought, that never
My feet shall tread the Hebridean strand,
“ For I have left my native hills for ever,
And dwell an exile from my father's land.”

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

EDENBAIN.

Alexander Smith, 1830-1867.

YOUNG Edenbain canter'd across to Kilmuir,
The road was rough, but his horse was sure.
The mighty sun taking his splendid sea-bath,
Made golden the greenness of valley and strath.

He cared not for sunset, for gold rock nor isle :
O'er his dark face there flitted a secretive smile.
His cousin, the great London merchant, was dead,
Edenbain was his heir—"I'll buy lands," he said.

"Men fear death. How should I! we live and we
learn—

I' faith, death has done me the handsomest turn.
Young, good-looking, thirty—(hie on, Roger, hie!)
I'll taste every pleasure that money can buy.

"Duntulm and Dunschiach may laugh at my birth.
Let them laugh! Father Adam was made out of earth.
What are worm-eaten castles and ancestry old,
'Gainst a modern purse stuffed with omnipotent gold?"

He saw himself riding to kirk and to fair,
Hats lifting, arms nudging, "That's Edenbain there!"
He thought of each girl he had known in his life,
Nor could fix on which sweetness to pluck for a wife.

Home Edenbain canter'd, with pride in his heart,
When sudden he pull'd up his horse with a start.
The road, which was bare as the desert before,
Was cover'd with people, a hundred and more.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

'Twas a black creeping funeral ; and Edenbain drew
His horse to the side of the roadway. He knew
In the cart rolling past that a coffin was laid—
But whose ? the harsh outline was hid by a plaid.

The cart pass'd. The mourners came marching behind :
In front his own father, grey-headed, stone-blind ;
And far-removed cousins, his own stock and race,
Came after in silence, a cloud on each face.

Together walked Mugstot and fiery-soul'd Ord,
Whom six days before he had left at his board.
Behind came the red-bearded sons of Tormore,
With whom he was drunk scarce a fortnight before.

“Who is dead ? Don't they know me ?” thought young
Edenbain,
With a weird terror gathering in heart and in brain.
In a moment the black crawling funeral was gone,
And he sat on his horse on the roadway alone.

“'Tis the second sight,” cried he ; “'tis strange that I
miss
Myself 'mong the mourners ! whose burial is this ?
“My God ! 'tis my own !” and the blood left his heart,
As he thought of the dead man that lay in the cart.

The sun, ere he sank in his splendid sea-bath,
Saw Edenbain spur through the golden-green strath.
Past a twilighted shepherd at watch rush'd a horse,
With Edenbain dragged at the stirrup a corse.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

HOME-SICKNESS.

Mrs. John Mac Kellar (Mary Cameron), 1834-1890.

MARY CAMERON was a native of Fortwilliam. Though mainly self-taught, she was an accomplished writer both in prose and verse—in Gaelic and in English. To her was entrusted the translation into Gaelic of the Queen's second series of *Leaves from Our Journal in the Highlands*. She was a contributor to many journals, and her verse was collected and published in 1880 under the title, *Poems and Songs, Gaelic and English*. What follows is one of her best known English pieces.

OH ! for the beautiful sunlight
That smiles on hill and lea,
And oh ! for thy glorious freshness
Thou rippling western sea !
The smell of the purple heather,
The myrtle wild, and thyme,
And the balmy fragrant sweetness
Of the Autumn's golden prime.

Oh ! for a sight of Ben Nevis !
Methinks I see him now,
As the morning sunlight crimsons
The snow-wreath on his brow.
As he shakes away the shadows,
His heart the sunshine thrills,
And he towers high and majestic
Amidst a thousand hills.

.
But dearer far than Ben Nevis,
And thy blue shores, Loch Eil,
The touch of the hand that bringeth
Emotion's gladsome thrill ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

And the sight of kindly faces
 Mine eyes have yearned to see ;
And the music of living voices,
 That sounds like psalms to me.

Oh ! fair is the face of Nature,
 But fair all things above
Is the soul that from her window
 Beams forth the light of love.
The wealth of affection treasured,
 In hearts that ne'er grow cold,
Is better than all earth's riches
 Of priceless gems and gold.

ELLEN, MO RÙN.

William Allan, 1837-1903.

ELLEN, mo Rùn ! See the sun is fast sweeping
 Out from his star-covered tent of the night ;
He calls to the flowers to awake from their sleeping,
 He calls to the birds for a song of delight ;
 His beams in their glee,
 Are calling on thee—
 Ellen, mo Rùn.

Ellen, mo Rùn ! in thy fair beauty glowing
 Never a beam so bright as thou art,
My boat is awaiting, a soft breeze is blowing,
 To bear thee away, gentle soul of my heart ;
 It comes from the sea,
 And whispers to thee—
 Ellen, mo Rùn.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Over the sea young Clanranald is speeding
With Ellen his love, from the isles of the west,
Onward they go, their pursuers unheeding,
The wind in the sail and love filling each breast ;
The waves sadly sigh,
As o'er them they fly—
Ellen, mo Rùn.

Their arrows are flying ! their claymores are gleaming !
Ochone ! for Clanranald protecting his bride,
A warrior he stands tho' his life-blood is streaming,
And falls at her feet in his beauty and pride ;
And with his last breath,
He murmurs in death—
Ellen, mo Rùn ! Ellen, mo Rùn !

THE WEE BURN.

William Allan.

Whaur hae ye come frae, wee bonnie burn ?
Whaur did ye learn sic a tune ?
I come frae the breist o' yon mountain brown,
An' my sang comes frae abune ;
Whaur did ye get sic a tender lay
That pierces my bosom thro' ?
I hae come frae the e'e o' the heather bell,
An' I've kissed the blue-bell's mou'—
Sing on, bonnie burnie, sing !

Whaur did ye get sic a merry lauch
An' the voice o' a joyous bairn ?
I hae touched the heart o' the white moss-rose,
An' played wi' the maiden fern ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Whaur did ye get sic a wailin' soun',
Like a broken-hearted cry?
I hae washed the girse by the auld kirkyard,
Whaur my lovers mould'rin' lie—
Sing on, bonnie burnie, sing!

Whaur did ye get sic a fearfu' note
That seems like the risin' win'?
I hae heard the groans o' deein' men,
And the rush o' battle din;
Whaur did ye get sic a cheerfu' look
An' a voice o' holy glee?
I ken I maun lie in my Faither's loof
For a' eternitie—
Sing on, bonnie burnie, sing!

ALASTAIR BAN.

William Allan.

ALASTAIR BAN, know the red-coats are coming,
Speed ye away to your mountain abode;
Alastair Ban, hie away in the gloaming,
Think not of me when the hounds are abroad.
Have they not reft us of chief and of glory?
Have they not slain the renowned of our clan?
Linger no more—seek the cave in the corrie—
Leave me, but love me, my Alastair Ban.

Alastair Ban, see our shielings are burning,
List to the shouts of our Sassenach foe;
Alastair Ban, hear the lone widows' mourning,
Homeless they wander in suffering and woe.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Why are ye sighing? oh! why are ye weeping?
Wild gleams your eye, and your cold cheek is wan;
Grasp not your sword—hark! the foemen are sweeping,
Kiss me and fly, my own Alastair Ban.

Alastair Ban, in my anguish of sorrow,
I live for your sake, and am ever with you;
Alastair Ban, how I pray for the morrow,
When peace will abide in our valley anew:
Oh! it will come when the noble have perished,
When Sassenach strangers shall crush every clan;
See how they ruin the homes that we cherished,
Fly from their wrath, oh! my Alastair Ban.

Alastair Ban sped away in the gloaming,
Sad was his heart as he trod o'er the heath;
Alastair Ban saw the red foemen coming,
And heard their wild yells as they marked him for
death.
'Mid the dark heather a maiden was kneeling,
To gaze on her lover with heart-broken scan,
Shrieks of despair into heaven were pealing,
Alas! they had slain her own Alastair Ban!

PASSING MORVEN.

John Mac Leod, D.D. (Govan), 1840-1898.

Down Mull's dark sound, from port to port,
The vessel holds upon her way;
From green Lochaline's wooded shore
To yonder castle-crowned bay.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

And silent, 'mid a motley throng
Of strangers, on her deck I stand ;
Watching with thoughts unutterable
The glory of the gliding land.

O land of Morven ! dearer far
To me than fairest spot on earth ;
O land on which my eyes first looked,
The land that gave my fathers birth.

Scanning to-day thy windy shores,
Although as through a haze of tears,
I feel anew thy wondrous spell,
Rich heir-loom of a hundred years.

I see the kirk-crowned sward of Kiel,
The old grey cross against the sky ;
The eastward-ordered grassy graves,
Where holy generations lie.

I seem to see in visions fair
The summer Sundays long ago :
The little church—his kingly head
Stooping to pass its lintels low.

I hear the old, familiar sounds
That broke but did not mar the calm ;
The clear sweet piping of the lark,
The plaintive cadence of the Psalm.

But past the shores of Achabeg,
By craggy Dhucraig—Achnahaw—
By Savray's beach and wooded knoll
We swiftly sweep and nearer draw

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

To where, the midmost channel reached,
Blest Fuinary I behold once more :
The double gables flanked with trees,
The gleaming arch above the door.

And every spot on which I gaze,
From sandy beach to cairn-topped Ben,
Islands and cottage, fields and burns,
Green Fingal's-hill, the bridge, the glen :

All—all—to-day, but speak to me
Of that bright past for ever fled :
Of him whose presence haunts them all,
A year past numbered with the dead.

Lo—the “ Grey Isles ” !—our paddles forge
Through rushing tides a track of foam,
The sullen shores of Mull are reached,
And I once more have lost my home.

THE WEDDING OF SHON MACLEAN.

A Bagpipe Melody.

Robert Buchanan, 1841-1891.

To the wedding of Shon Maclean,
Twenty Pipers together
Came in the wind and the rain
Playing across the heather ;
Backward their ribbons flew,
Blast upon blast they blew,
Each clad in tartan new,
Bonnet and blackcock feather :
And every Piper was fou,
Twenty Pipers together ! . . .

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

He's but a Sassenach blind and vain
Who never heard of Shon Maclean—
The Duke's own Piper, called "Shon the Fair,"
From his freckled skin and his fiery hair.
Father and son, since the world's creation,
The Macleans had followed this occupation,
And played the pibroch to fire the Clan
Since the first Duke came and the earth began.
Like the whistling of birds, like the humming of bees,
Like the sough of the south-wind in the trees,
Like the singing of angels, the playing of shawms,
Like Ocean itself with its storms and its calms,
Were the strains of Shon, when with cheeks aflame
He blew a blast thro' the pipes of fame.
At last in the prime of his playing life,
The spirit moved him to take a wife—
A lassie with eyes of Highland blue,
Who loved the pipes and the Piper too;
And danced to the sound with a foot and a leg
White as a lily and smooth as an egg.
So, twenty Pipers were coming together
O'er the moor and across the heather.

All in the wind and the rain :
Twenty Pipers so brawly dressed
Were flocking in from the east and the west,
To bless the bedding and blow their best
At the wedding of Shon Maclean.

At the wedding of Shon Maclean
'Twas wet and windy weather !
Yet thro' the wind and the rain
Came twenty Pipers together !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Earach and Dougal Dhu,
Sandy of Islay too,
Each with the bonnet o' blue,
Tartan and blackcock feather :
And every Piper was fou,
Twenty Pipers together !

The knot was tied, the blessing said,
Shon was married, the feast was spread.
At the head of the table sat, huge and hoar,
Strong Sandy of Islay, age fourscore,
Whisker'd, grey as a Haskeir seal,
And clad in crimson from head to heel.
Beneath and round him in their degree
Gathered the men of minstrelsie,
With keepers, gillies, and lads and lasses,
Mingling voices, and jingling glasses.
At soup and haggis, at roast and boil'd,
Awhile the happy gathering toiled—
While Shon and Jean at table ends
Shook hands with a hundred of their friends.—
Then came a hush. Thro' the open door
A wee bright form flash'd on the floor—
The Duke himself, in the kilt and plaid,
With slim soft knees, like the knees of a maid.
And he took a glass, and he cried out plain,
“ I drink to the health of Shon Maclean !
To Shon the Piper and Jean his wife,
A clean fireside and a merry life ! ”
Then out he slipt, and each man sprang
To his feet, and with “ hooch ” the chamber rang !
“ Clear the tables ! ” shrieked out one—
A leap, a scramble—and it was done !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

And then the Pipers all in a row
Tuned their pipes and began to blow,
While all to dance stood fain :
Sandy of Islay and Earach Mor,
Dougal Dhu from Kilfinnan shore,
Played up the company on the floor
At the wedding of Shon Maclean.

At the wedding of Shon Maclean
Twenty Pipers together
Stood up, while all their train
Ceased to clatter and blether.
Full of the mountain-dew,
First in their pipes they blew,
Mighty of bone and thew,
Red cheek'd, with lungs of leather :
And every Piper was fou,
Twenty Pipers together !

Who led the dance? In pomp and pride
The Duke himself led out the Bride !
Great was the joy of each beholder,
For the wee Duke only reach'd her shoulder ;
And they danced, and turned, when the reel began,
Like a giantess and a fairie man !
But like an earthquake was the din
When Shon himself led the Duchess in !
And she took her place before him there,
Like a white mouse dancing with a bear !
So trim and tiny, so slim and sweet,
Her blue eyes watching Shon's great feet,
With a smile that could not be resisted,
She jigged, and jumped, and twirled, and twisted !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Sandy of Islay led off the reel,
The Duke began it with toe and heel,
Then all joined in amain ;
Twenty Pipers ranged in a row,
From squinting Shamus to lame Kilcroe,
Their cheeks like crimson, began to glow,
At the wedding of Shon Maclean.

At the wedding of Shon Maclean
They blew with lungs of leather,
And blithesome was the strain
Those Pipers played together !
Moist with the mountain-dew,
Mighty of bone and thew,
Each with the bonnet o' blue,
Tartan, and blackcock feather :
And every Piper was fou,
Twenty Pipers together !

Oh for a wizard's tongue to tell
Of all the wonders that befell !
Of how the Duke when the first stave died,
Reached up on tiptoe to kiss the Bride,
While Sandy's pipes, as their mouths were meeting,
Skirled and set every heart a-beating !
Then Shon took the pipes ! and all was still,
And silently he the bags did fill,
With flaming cheeks and round bright eyes,
Till the first faint music began to rise.
Like a thousand laverocks singing in tune,
Like countless corn-craiks under the moon,
Like the smack of kisses, like sweet bells ringing,
Like a mermaid's harp, or a kelpie singing,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Blew the pipes of Shon ; and the witching strain
Was the gathering song of the Clan Maclean !
Then slowly, softly, at his side,
All the Pipers around replied,
 And swelled the solemn strain :
The hearts of all were proud and light,
To hear the music, to see the sight,
And the Duke's own eyes were dim that night,
 At the wedding of Shon Maclean.

So to honour the Clan Maclean
 Straight they began to gather,
Blowing the wild refrain,
 “ Blue bonnets across the heather ! ”
They stamped, they strutted, they blew ;
They shrieked ; like cocks, they crew ;
Blowing the notes out true,
 With wonderful lungs of leather :
And every Piper was fou,
 Twenty Pipers together !

When the Duke and Duchess went away
The dance grew mad and the guests grew gay :
Man and maiden, face to face,
Leapt and footed and screamed apace !
Round and round the dancers whirled,
Shriller, louder, the Pipers skirled,
Till the soul seemed swooning into sound,
And all creation was whirling round !
Then, in a pause of the dance and glee,
The Pipers, ceasing their minstrelsie,
Draining the glass in groups did stand,
And passed the sneesh-box from hand to hand.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Sandy of Islay, with locks of snow,
Squinting Shamus, blind Kilmahoe,
Finlay Beg, and Earach Mor,
Dougal Dhu of Kilfinnan shore—
All the Pipers, black, yellow, and green,
All the colours that ever were seen,
All the Pipers of all the Macs,
Gathered together and took their cracks.
Then (no man knows how the thing befell,
For none was sober enough to tell)
These heavenly Pipers from twenty places
Began disputing with crimson faces ;
Each asserting, like one demented,
The claims of the Clan he represented.
In vain grey Sandy of Islay strove
To soothe their struggle with words of love,
Asserting there, like a gentleman,
The superior claims of his own great clan ;
Then, finding to reason is despair,
He seizes his pipes and he plays an air—
The gathering tune of his clan—and tries
To drown in music the shrieks and cries !
Heavens ! Every Piper, grown mad with ire,
Seizes *his* pipes with a fierce desire,
And blowing madly with skirl and squeak,
Begins *his* particular tune to shriek !
Up and down the gamut they go,
Twenty Pipers all in a row,
 Each with a different strain !
Each tries hard to drown the first,
Each blows louder till like to burst.
Thus were the tunes of the Clans rehearst
 At the wedding of Shon Maclean !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

At the wedding of Shon Maclean,
Twenty Pipers together,
Blowing with might and main,
Thro' wonderful lungs of leather !
Wild was the hullabaloo !
They stamped, they screamed, they crew !
Twenty strong blasts they blew,
Holding the heart in tether :
And every Piper was fou,
Twenty Pipers together !

A storm of music ! Like wild sleuth-hounds
Contending together were the sounds !
At last a bevy of Eve's bright daughters
Poured oil—that's whisky—upon the waters ;
And after another dram went down
The Pipers chuckled and ceased to frown,
Embraced like brothers and kindred spirits,
And fully admitted each other's merits.
All bliss must end ! For now the Bride
Was looking weary and heavy-eyed,
And soon she stole from the drinking chorus,
While the company settled to *deoch-an-dorus*.
One hour—another—took its flight—
The clock struck twelve—the dead of night—
And still the Bride like a rose so red
Lay lonely up in the bridal bed.
At half-past two the Bridegroom, Shon,
Dropt on the table as heavy as stone,
But four strong Pipers across the floor
Carried him up to the bridal door,
Pushed him in at the open portal,
And left him snoring, serene and mortal !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

The small stars twinkled over the heather,
As the Pipers wandered away together,
But one by one on the journey dropt,
Clutching his pipes and there he stopt !
One by one on the dark hillside
Each faint blast of the bagpipes died,
Amid the wind and the rain !
And the twenty Pipers at break of day
In twenty several bogholes lay,
Serenely sleeping upon their way
From the wedding of Shon Maclean !

HIGHLAND LAMENT.

Robert Buchanan.

“ O MAR tha mi ! 'tis the wind that's blowing,
O mar tha mi ! 'tis the sea that's white !
'Tis my own brave boatman was up and going,
From Uist to Barra at dead of night ;
Body of black and wings of red
His boat went out on the stormy sea.
O mar tha mi ! can I sleep in my bed ?
O gille dubh ! come back to me !

“ O mar thai mi ! is it weed out yonder ?
Is it drifting weed or a tangled sail ?
On the shore I wait and watch and wander.
It's calm this day after last night's gale.
O this is the skiff with wings so red,
And it floats upturned on the glassy sea.
O mar tha mi ! is my boatman dead ?
O gille dubh ! come back to me !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

“ O mar tha mi ! ’tis a corpse that’s sleeping,
Floating there on the slippery sands ;
His face is drawn and his locks are dreeping,
His arms are stiff and he’s clench’d his hands.
Turn him up on his slimy bed,
Clean his face from the weed o’ the sea.
O mar tha mi ! ’tis my boatman dead !
O gille dubh ! won’t you look at me ?
“ O mar tha mi ! ’tis my love that’s taken !
O mar tha mi ! I am left forlorn !
He’ll never kiss and he’ll never waken,
He’ll never look on the babe unborn.
His blood is water, his heart is lead,
He’s dead and slain by the cruel sea.
O mar tha mi ! I am lone in my bed,
My gille dubh is lost to me ! ”

THE GLAMOUR.

Robert Buchanan.

Worn with the pain, worn with the pain,
She would lie down, and sleep again !

O LORD my God, draw not Thy hand away—
The sleep-stoure fills my eyes—I feel my grave—
And I would reach a painless end, like those
Thy glamour ne’er hath troubled. I have been
O’er long a shadow on the paths of men,
O’er long a screeching bird in happy fields,
O’er long a haunted wanderer day and night.
Lord, let me die ! Lord, let me die ! Lord God,
Pity and spare me ! Draw Thy hand away !
Thy breath is on me in the mirk, and ah !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

I sicken sore, while yonder through the pane
Corpse-candles, blowing blue against the wind,
Flit slowly to the kirkyard, down Glen-Earn.

What had I done, that Thou shouldst pick me out,
To breathe Thy glamour on? I was a lass
Happy and heartsome, till that dreesome day
I walked from kirk by moonlight down the glen,
And saw Maccaskill of Craig-Dhouil pass,
Sewn to the middle in his winding-sheet,
And waving hairy arms until I swoon'd ;
And ere a year was run Maccaskill died ;
And then I kenn'd I had the bitter gift
My father and my father's father had.
Yet I was young, and felt a kind o' pride,
To see so far into Thy mysteries.

.

All at once

The glamour came across my soul again.
One night, while we were seated in the bield,
I heard a wailing come from but the house,
And horror gript me. "Mother!" Angus cried,
Glow'ring full fear'd into my burning eyes,
"What ails thee?" "Wheesht!" I whisper'd; "hear
ye nought?"
"Nought!" Angus said. And then I heard a sound
Of groans, and clapping hands; and suddenly
I saw my Angus shrink until he grew
As small as any babe new-born, and turn,
Swift as the fireflaught, to himself again.—
And while I screamed, and fell upon his neck,
Weeping, and kissing him, and moaning low,
He sicken'd at my face, and swoon'd away.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

BY ISLAY'S SHORES.

William Black, 1841-1898.

By Islay's shores she sat and sang :

“ O winds come blowing o'er the sea,
And bring me back my love again
That went to fight in Germanie ! ”

And all the live-long day she sang,
And nursed the bairn upon her knee :
“ Balou, balou, my bonnie bairn,
Thy father's far in Germanie,

“ But ere the summer days are gane,
And winter blackens bush and tree,
Thy father will be welcome hame
Frae the red wars in Germanie.”

O dark the nicht fell, dark and mirk ;
A wraith stood by her icily :
“ Dear wife, I'll never more win hame,
For I am slain in Germanie.

“ On Minden's field I'm lying stark,
And heaven is now my far countrie ;
Farewell, dear wife, farewell, farewell,
I'll ne'er win hame frae Germanie.”

And all the year she came and went,
And wandered wild frae sea to sea :
“ O neighbours, is he ne'er come back,
My love that went to Germanie ? ”

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Port Ellen saw her many a time ;
Round by Port Askaig wandered she :
“Where is the ship that’s sailing in
With my dear love frae Germanie ?”

But when the darkened winter fell :
“It’s cold for baith my bairn and me ;
Let me lie down and rest awhile ;
My love’s away frae Germanie.

“O far away and away he dwells ;
High Heaven is now his fair countrie ;
And there he stands—with arms outstretched—
To welcome hame my bairn and me !”

THE CHIEFTAIN'S GRAVE.

The Hon. James Inglis, *circa* 1845.

LOUDLY swells the wailing pibroch
O'er the heath and down the glen ;
And from out the frowning archway
March a troop of stricken men :
And a pale face at the casement
Looks with fixed and stony stare
At the sword, and dirk, and target,
On the coffin which they bear.

Brave Macdonald ! ever foremost
In the fierce and deadly strife ;
His trusty claymore ever gleaming
Where the thickest blows were rife.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

The grand old Chieftain, lion-hearted,
Lifeless lies upon the bier,
And the soul-inspiring slogan
Ne'er again will reach his ear.

O'er the bridge and through the bracken,
Winding slowly round the hill ;
Through the one street of the clachan
Wails the solemn pibroch still.
O'er the steep and rocky pathway
Slowly moves the funeral train,
Where the silver birch-trees whisper
In a mournful, saddened strain.
And the wild wail of the bagpipe
Mingles with the mountain blast,
And the weird and gloomy pine-trees
Solemn shadows o'er them cast.
Wild and haggard are those faces,
Slow and weary is their tread ;
But each thinks of deadly vengeance—
Vengeance for the slaughtered dead.

But even, while the sad procession
Reach a lone and narrow glen,
Silently are closing round them
Fierce Red Ranald and his men.
Crouching, crawling through the heather,
Closing slowly round their prey :
Suddenly they raise the war cry,
Rushing down in fierce array.
But the little band of heroes
Softly laid their burden down ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Then each clutched his gleaming dagger,
While the deep determined frown
On each brow spoke more than volumes—
Spoke of matchless chivalry :
With their lord they oft had conquered,
O'er his body now they'd die.

Like a rushing, swollen torrent
Came the savage clansmen on ;
Like the blast among the pine-trees
When the branches bend and moan ;
Like a rock in troubled ocean,
Fiercly dashing back the spray,
Stood the stern heroic mourners,
Like a lion brought to bay.
And the clear and ringing war cry,
And the shriek of dying men,
And the clash of crimsoned weapons,
Broke the silence of the glen.
Then the little phalanx wavered,
Fighting every inch of sod ;
Yet they faced the hated foemen,
As their souls returned to God.

Waves the fierce, unequal combat,
Dead they lie amid the gorse ;
Till at length the last Macdonald
Falls upon his Chieftain's corse :
And the base and cruel Ranald
Left them lying where they fell,
While the heath and quivering blue-bell
Gently tolled their funeral knell ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

And the dreary night-wind rising,
Moaned a solemn dirge-like strain ;
And the broom shook off its tassels,
To efface the bloody stain.

Where the heath's a deeper purple,
Where the swarthy hazels grow ;
Where amid the whispering bracken,
Solemn night-winds softly blow ;
Where the melancholy plover
Builds her solitary nest,
There the loyal brave Macdonalds
Round their master quietly rest.
'Neath the grey and mossy cairn,
Where the nodding blue-bells wave ;
By the crooning, wimpling burnie,
There you'll find the Chieftain's grave.

CHRIST AND THE ROBIN.

From the Festival of the Birds.

A Legend of the Age of St. Columba.

Fiona Mac Leod (William Sharp), 1856-1905.

“ Is there song upon thee, O Bru-dhearg ? ” said Columba.

Then the Red-breast sang, and the singing was so sweet
that tears came into the eyes of Colum, and he thought the
sunlight that was streaming from the east was melted into that
lilting sweet song. It was a hymn that the Bru-dhearg sang,
and it was this :

HOLY, Holy, Holy,
Christ upon the Cross ;
My little nest was near,
Hidden in the moss.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Holy, holy, holy,
Christ was pale and wan :
His eyes beheld me singing,
*Bron, Bron, mo Bron ! **

Holy, Holy, Holy,
" Come near, O wee brown bird !"
Christ spake : and lo, I lighted
Upon the Living Word.

Holy, Holy, Holy,
I heard the mocking scorn !
But *Holy, Holy, Holy,*
I sang against a thorn !

Holy, Holy, Holy,
Ah, his brow was bloody :
Holy, Holy, Holy,
All my breast was ruddy.

Holy, Holy, Holy,
Christ's-Bird shalt thou be :
Thus said Mary Virgin
There on Calvary.

Holy, Holy, Holy,
A wee brown bird am I :
But my breast is ruddy
For I saw Christ die.

Holy, Holy, Holy,
By this ruddy feather,
Colum call thy monks, and
All the birds together.

* " O Grief, Grief, my Grief."

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

THE CLOSING DOORS.

Fiona Mac Leod (William Sharp).

EILIDH, Eilidh, Eilidh, heart of me, dear and sweet !
In dreams I am hearing the whisper, the sound of your
coming feet :

The sound of your coming feet that like the sea-hoofs
beat

A music by day and night, Eilidh, on the sands of my
heart, my sweet !

O sands of my heart, what wind moans low along thy
shadowy shore ?

Is that the deep sea-heart I hear with the dying sob
at its core ?

Each dim lost wave that lapses is like a closing door :
'Tis closing doors they hear at last who soon shall
hear no more,

Who soon shall hear no more.

Eilidh, Eilidh, Eilidh, come home, come home to the
heart o' me :

It is pain I am having ever, Eilidh, a pain that will not
be :

Come home, come home, for closing doors are as the
waves o' the sea,

Once closed they are closed for ever, Eilidh, lost, lost,
for thee and me,

Lost, lost, for thee and me.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

INTO THE SILENCE.

(A DEATH IN THE WEST HIGHLANDS).

Fiona Mac Leod (William Sharp).

UNGATHERED lie the peats upon the moss ;
No more is heard the shaggy pony's hoof ;
The thin smoke curls no more above the roof ;
Unused the brown-sailed boat doth idly toss
At anchor in the Kyle ; and all across
The strath the collie scours without reproof ;
The gather'd sheep stand wonderingly aloof ;
And everywhere there is a sense of loss.

" Has Sheumas left for over sea ? " Nay, sir,
A se'nnight since a gloom came over him ;
He sicken'd, and his gaze grew vague and dim ;
Three days ago we found he did not stir.
He has gone into the Silence. 'Neath yon fir
He lies, and waits the Lord in darkness grim.

THE HILLS OF RUEL.

Fiona Mac Leod (William Sharp).

" OVER the hills and far away "—
That is the tune I heard one day,
When heather-drowsy I lay and listened
And watched where the stealthy sea-side glistened.

Beside me there on the hills of Ruel
An old man stooped and gathered fuel—
And I asked him this : if his son were dead,
As the folk in Glendaruel all said,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

How could he still believe that never
Duncan had crossed the shadowy river.

Forth from his breast the old man drew
A lute that once on a rowan-tree grew :
And, speaking no words, began to play
“ Over the hills and far away.”

“ But how do you know,” I said, thereafter,
“ That Duncan has heard the fairy laughter ?
How do you know he has followed the cruel
Honey-sweet folk of the Hills of Ruel ? ”
“ How do I know,” the old man said,
“ Sure I know well my boy’s not dead :
For late on the morrow they hid him, there
Where the black earth moistens his yellow hair
I saw him alone on the moor close by,
I watched him low on the hillside lie,
An’ I heard him laughin’ wild up there,
An’ talk, talk, talkin’ beneath his hair—
For down o’er his face his long hair lay,
But I saw it was cold and ashy grey.
Ay, laughin’ and talkin’ wild he was,
An’ that to a Shadow out on the grass,
A Shadow that made my blood go chill,
For never its like have I seen on the hill.
An’ the moon came up, an’ the stars grew white,
An’ the hills grew black in the gloom o’ the night,
An’ I watched till the death-star sank in the moon
And the moonmaid fled with her moonwhite shoon,
Then the Shadow that was on the moorside there
Rose up and shook its shadowy hair,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

And Duncan he laughed no more, but grey
As the rainy dust of a rainy day,
Went over the hills and far away."

"Over the hills and far away"—
That is the tune I heard one day.
O that I too might hear the cruel
Honey-sweet folk of the Hills of Ruel.

CONTEMPORARY VERSE.

THE LADS WITH THE KILT.

(GILLEAN AN FHEILIDH.)

Alice C. Mac Donell (of Keppoch).

With light steps springing across the heather
They come, the lads of the kilt and feather,
So bonnily shoulder to shoulder together,
*Mo ghaol air gillean an fheilidh.**

They bring the dash of the mountain torrent,
The sway of the pine in their easy gait,
The poise of the stag, the glance of the eagle,
So proudly they march in their Highland state ;
Mo ghaol air gillean an fheilidh.

The depth of the tarn in their winning glances,
Just as the sunlight is glancing through,
The rippling burn in their merry laughter,
Speaking the stout heart, leal and true ;
Mo ghaol air gillean an fheilidh.

* My love to the lads with the kilt.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Play to us, play to us, lads with the tartan,
Gay as the streamers that float in the van,
The glamour that speaks through the fairy chanter's
Gladdens the soul of each Highland man ;
Mo ghaol air gillean an fheilidh.

Follow thee, follow thee, aye will we follow thee,
Whithersoever ye choose to lead,
Down thro' the valley or up o'er the mountains,
The greater the peril, the braver the deed ;
Mo ghaol air gillean an fheilidh.

Well do they know it, when trouble is brewing,
Where do they look for the men that are true ?
Where do they turn for the trust never failing ?
Where but to you, brave bonnets of blue ;
Mo ghaol air gillean an fheilidh.

A RÙN.

Alice C. Mac Donell (of Keppoch).

SHADOWS that rise, shadows that play,
Warm from the firelight glow,
Thoughts that rise, thoughts that stray,
Out to the wild glen's snow.
O, the snow lies deep, and the way is long,
Where the night winds sigh to the water's song,
And laughter is here, and loving cheer,
Such love as they have to give a rùn,
Such love as they have to give !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Winds that rise, winds that blow
Through corrie and deep ravine :
Carry me far to the torrents' flow,
And wrap me in tartan sheen.
The pine is covered with elfin leaves, soft, and pure,
and white,
And the mantle fine of the great ben shines with
glittering gems bedight.
'Tis far for the strain of a wild refrain ;
But I hear the pipers play a rùn,
I hear the pipers play.

Voices that rise, voices that fall,
Down in the fairies' glen :
Who enters once 'neath the mystic pall,
May listen no more to men.
And the faces fade, and the voices die,
And I hear but the sound of a wild heart cry,
'Tis far, I ween, from the mountain stream,
But not too far for love, a rùn,
Not too far for love.

Waves that beat, waves that surge,
Circling the Scottish shore,
'Tis easy your 'gainst the heart to urge,
For to-night is an open door.
O, what are the stranger voices I hear, what are their
tones to me ?
I see but the stars on the snow peaks shine, I hear but
the moan of the sea.
For this heart of mine, flings back to thine,
The further from thee I roam, a rùn,
The further from thee I roam !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

IN THE ISLE OF EE.

K. D. M.

Do you mind that day, best of days, Kirsteen?
When fate, smiling kind, linked our ways, Kirsteen,
By a moonlit strand where the fitful sea
From angry fret had turned to glee,
 Now rippling laughed, now smiled serene,
 At the thought of you by his side, Kirsteen.

Wearied Sol had gone to his rest, Kirsteen,
To his couch in the far, far west, Kirsteen,
And Luna bright in the halls of night,
In her robe of lusted silvern light,
 Marched on, methought, a peerless queen,
 I ne'er had seen *thee* then, Kirsteen.

I remember well the chime, Kirsteen,
Of a distant bell, telling nine, Kirsteen,
When low and clear to my wond'ring ear
A sweet voice came from the sea-brink near,
 You thought yourself unheard, unseen,
 As you sang that night by the sea, Kirsteen.

But it heard that night did the sea, Kirsteen,
And it lost its heart—like me, Kirsteen;
The tameless sea from its lawless caves
Came fain to thy feet with suppliant waves,
 But all cannot win in love, Kirsteen,
 So the sad sea moans and laments, Kirsteen.

Do you mind that day, best of days, Kirsteen?
When fate, smiling kind, linked our ways, Kirsteen,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

In the Holy Isle, in the Isle of Ee,
The isle of my joy in the Western Sea,
Of earth's fair isles, the bounteous queen,
The isle that gave me thee, Kirsteen.

THE HIGHLAND EMIGRANTS.

"A. V."

THERE's sighing and sobbing in yon Highland forest ;
There's weeping and wailing in yon Highland vale,
And fitfully flashes a gleam from the ashes
Of the tenantless hearth in the home of the Gael.
There's a ship on the sea, and her white sails she's
spreading,
All ready to speed to a far distant shore ;
She may come home again wi' the yellow gowd laden,
But the sons of Glendarra shall come back no more.

The gowan may spring by the clear-rinnin' burnie,
The cushat may coo in the green woods again :
The deer o' the mountain may drink at the fountain,
Unfettered and free as the wave on the main ;
But the pibroch they played o'er the sweet blooming
heather
Is hushed in the sound of the ocean's wild roar ;
The song and the dance they hae vanished thegither,
For the maids of Glendarra shall come back no more.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

TWILIGHT ON LOCH CARRON.

V. B. Mac Kenzie.

THE twilight is slowly dying. O'er the hill
The purple shades of evening come and go.
Dim sounds rise from the village far below,
The yellow corn waves gently to and fro—
All else is weirdly calm and still.

The loch lies dim and dark with shadows deep;
Has tempest ever swept its tranquil breast?
Has thunder ever rolled up from the west?
All seems so strangely still—so much at rest—
As if all life were sunk in death-like sleep.

Sometimes a low, soft note comes from the land;
A fisher's call, an idle jest, a cry;
A mournful Gaelic song floats like a sigh,
Finding among the hills a faint reply—
Dim voices echoing o'er the shining strand.

O calm, dark loch! O strange, mysterious shore!
With sedges low and damp, and tangled ware
Floating upon the tide like maiden's hair!
Near you my soul grows hushed in silent prayer,
Like quiet death, you soothe me evermore.

TO THE HOMELAND.

Wm. Campbell Galbraith.

O! I'm weary, weary, weary, of the roar o' London
town,
My heart is filled with longing for the hills o' grey and
brown,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

And the scent o' pines and seawrack, and the sight of
warring seas,
And the sighing o' the spring winds among the leafless
trees.

O! home, my home, I see you, set by the Western
shore,
Where the wild Atlantic breezes blow the sea foam to
the door;
Cold and grey the sky above you, and tho' all the land
is bare,
My Highland heart is longing, filled with longing to
be there.

For I'm sick o' streets and peoples, and I'm tired and
want to rest,
So I'll hie me to the Northland, to the place I love the
best,
There in quiet the glens are sleeping, while the sea
frets in the bay,
And the westland winds shall charm me, charm all
my cares away.

A HIGHLAND FUNERAL.

J. H. M.

SOLEMNLY, solemnly, solemnly,
With measured steps and slow,
The clansmen tread their native heath,
Hearts mourning as they go.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Solemnly, solemnly, solemnly,
The pibroch's wailing strain
Falls plaintive on each mountain rock,
And echoes back again.

Solemnly, solemnly, solemnly,
They wind o'er plain and hill,
Bound for the little sleeping place,
Where death must have his fill.

Solemnly, solemnly, solemnly,
Along they bear his prey,
Each footstep weighted as with lead,
On that sad, joyless day.

Solemnly, solemnly, solemnly,
The plaided clansmen go,
The bird for them refrains his scream,
O'er silent Beal-nam-bo.

.
Only the bagpipe's sounding swell,
Bore our last parting strain,
Bidding for them our fond adieu,
Then homeward trod again.

O'ER THE MOOR.

A. C. Mac Leod.

"Songs of the North."

O'ER the moor I wander lonely,
Ochon-a-rie, my heart is sore ;
Where are all the joys I cherished ?
With my darling they have perished,
And they will return no more.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

I loved thee first, I loved thee only,
Ochon-a-rie, my heart is sore ;
I loved thee from the day I met thee,
What care I though all forget thee ?
I will love thee evermore.

MAIDEN OF MORVEN.

Harold Boulton.

“Songs of the North.”

MOAN ye winds that never sleep,
Howl ye spirits of the deep,
Roar ye torrents down the steep
Roll ye mists on Morven.
May the tempests never rest
Nor the seas with peace be blest,
Since they tore thee from my breast,
Maiden of Morven !

Fairer than the flowers that grow,
Purer than the rills that flow,
Gentler than the fallow doe
’Mid the woods of Morven ;
As the leaf is to the tree,
As the summer to the bee,
So wert thou, my Love, to me,
Maiden of Morven !

Ossian’s harp sings Fingal’s praise ;
Wild the lilt of Carril’s lays,
Men and maids of other days
Fire his tales of Morven.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Though their chords like thunder roll,
When at Beltane brims the bowl,
Thou'rt the music of my soul,
Maiden of Morven !

Oft I chased the deer of yore ;
Many a battle-brunt I bore,
When the chiefs of Innistore
Hurled their might on Morven.
Blunt my spear, and slack my bow,
Like an empty ghost I go,
Death the only hope I know,
Maiden of Morven !

HIGHLANDERS SHOULDER TO SHOULDER !

The Duke of Argyll, K.G., K.T.

HEARTY be our Highland greeting !
Bright we'll keep in Memory's eye
Sunlit clouds—blue spaces meeting
O'er the mountains piled on high !
See again the torrent falls
Down the Corrie's echoing walls !

Hear amidst the Summer's glory,
Where it o'er the Heather lies,
Red grouse chuckle their love-story,
Hushed when some far Eagle cries :
Forest Pine and Birch are mute :
Listeners hear no Blackcock's flute.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Let us feel the day's not over
When our feet went with the Deer !
Fortune, if too fast we drove her
Still shall yield us Highland cheer !
Still on Loch, and Ocean's shore
We shall meet her, as of yore !

Keep the knees still free for climbing,
Or where Reels swift dances flow ;
Keep the heart still strong for rhyming,
Where the Bards old Legends know !
Make your Highland kinsfolk own
You are Highland—Blood—and Bone.

"I WOULD NOT BID THEE STAY."

R. Ross Napier.

AWAY, it is duty that calls thee,
Beloved, thou must leave me to-day ;
'Tis for thee to be fighting and toiling,
'Tis for me to wait and pray.
But if in the far off sometime
We two should meet again,
Surely the gladness of meeting
Will requite the parting pain.

Ah, fain would I have thee forever,
Forever and a day ;
But if duty we twain must sever,
I would not bid thee stay.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Oft in years that have vanished, thy fathers
Were nerved to the blood-stirring charge,
For their dames had buckled the claymore,
Their daughters had given the targe.
And shall I, a chieftain's daughter,
Be poorer in spirit than they?
No, No ! I will trust to the morrow
To banish the clouds of to-day.

Yet fain would I have thee forever,
Forever and a day ;
But if duty we twain must sever,
I would not bid thee stay.

But if it should be forever,
And here we should meet no more,
Remember the Isle of Angus,*
That lies by the western shore,
Where the voice of Niambh gives welcome,
And the Twin Birds sing above,
When the sun of life is sinking,
I shall come to thee my love.

And nothing we twain shall sever,
No duty shall call thee away ;
And I will have thee forever,
Forever and a day.

*The Isle of Youth, which lies in the Western Sea, and is ruled by Angus, the Celtic god of love. Here lovers whose vows have, through fate, been unfulfilled on earth, will meet again, and receive welcome from Niambh (Neeve), a beautiful spirit maiden.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

MAC INTOSH'S LAMENT.

Malcolm MacFarlane.

HARK the pipe's piercing wail,
Sounding clear on the gale,
As they bear adown the vale
My brave, my noble marrow.
Pride of the Highlands, chief of his clan,
Ever in danger leading the van,
Death ne'er laid a fairer man
Within his chamber narrow.

Day of dule ! day of woe !
Day that saw Evan low,
Thou wilt ne'er from memory go
While life's dim lamp is burning.
In the morn a bride was I ;
Wife when noonday's sun was high ;
Ere its light had left the sky
I was a widow mourning !

Life is drear now to me ;
Since they've ta'en him from me,
What again can gladden me !
What dispel my sorrow ?
Love was sweet and I was gay ;
Love was short, now joy's away ;
Grief has come, but grief will stay,
Renewed with every morrow !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

THE TWA TRAIVLERS.

Sir Donald Mac Alister, K.C.B.

Twa traivlers gaed ance to the Hielans awa,
I' the hairst—oh ! it's then that the Hielans are braw !
The tane he gaed—to be like the lave ;
The tither his ane heart's yearning drave.

And when they baith were cam hame again,
Their friens and neighbours were unco fain,
And deaved them wi' spierin, ane and a'—
“ Weel, what hae ye seen i' thae Hielans awa ? ”

The tane he gantit and scra't his pow—
“ Oh ! naething by-ordinar that I mind o' :
Jist hill and heather, and loch and linn,
And the blue o' the lift, and the glint o' the sinn.”

The tither leuch laigh, and the like spak he,
But wi' blithesome face, and wi' glisterin' e'e—
“ Ay ! hill and heather ! and loch and linn !
And the blue o' the lift ! and the glint o' the sinn ! ”

THE FAIRY PIPER.

Margaret Thomson Mac Gregor.

O I'LL follow the Fairy Piper
Over the hills o' dream,
To where the odorous night-flowers grow
In the silver moon a-gleam.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

I'll follow the Fairy Piper
To undreamt-of lands afar,
He leads me ever, ever on
By the light of moon and star.

Would you hear the Fairy Piper?
Go when the moon lies pale,
Upon the circling mountains
And the green and lonely vale;

And then the Fairy Piper
Will play to you a tune,
Sweeter than any mortals know
Beneath the light o' the moon.

O the dainty Fairy Piper!
His clothes are green and gold,
And he rouses gallant thoughts in me
With his piping clear and bold.

And then, full soft and sweetly
He pipes a tender lay,
Such as may make a lover's heart
Grow soft in nights of May.

And now the mother's crooning
Falls soft on the evening air,
You see her loving, bending o'er
Her babe with tender care.

And then—a sound of mourning;
A coronach of gloom;
The night-winds wail and shiver
And the shadows ghostlier loom.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Then—melody so dainty
That the elves to it may dance,
And you feel a dream steal o'er you—
A deep and musing trance.

Then—droning, droning, droning—
The music of the sea,
Its moaning and its sobbing—
Its haunting mystery ;

The sighing of the breezes
In leafy nights of June—
You hear them all, and more than all,
In the Fairy Piper's tune.

O the bonnie, bonnie Piper !
I love his music well,
And oft at eve I hear him play
In the dim and shady dell.

O play, my Fairy Piper !
Play me a gallant tune !
And I will ever follow thee
'Neath the light o' the mystic moon.

THE WIDOW MAC DOUGALL.

D. M. Mac Kenzie.

WHEN I heard that my friend John Mac Dougall was
dead,

I called on his widow, her sorrow to share ;
She was making the tea, and she wept as she said,
“ Now Mr. Mac Pherson, just draw in your chair.”

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Then I said I would come with my trunk and would
stay

To help the poor widow the wolf for to scare,
And I mind at the table how sweet she would say,
“Now Mr. Mac Pherson, just draw in your chair.”

We spoke of Mac Dougall, whose spirit was fled,
Of his death so untimely and virtue so rare,
But Flora would smile through her tears as she said,
“Now, Dugald, my dear, will you draw in your
chair?”

They was countless the tears for Mac Dougall we shed,
But perhaps it was good himself was not there,
For sometimes at night when the table was spread,
It was, “Dugald, my darling, just draw in your
chair.”

So myself said to Flora, “I’m thinking, my dear,
We have cried for Mac Dougall enough and to spare;
Mac Dougall is dead, but Mac Pherson is here”—
And I hung up my hat, and I drew in my chair.

FLOWERS OF OCEAN.

Dugald Mac Echern, M.A., B.D.

SWEET Island maid! when first I loved
Thy soul and body—thy tangled hair,
Thy foam-white limbs—ah! then I proved
The world is more than good and fair.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

O Mhàiri ! could the world be good
If thy sweet friendship I should lack ?
The sea-birds mourn thee where we stood
Last Yule beside the strewn sea-wrack.

The wrack—the wild sea-flowers ! The wave
Hath torn them from the Ocean floor ;
Their rich brown tresses find no grave,
But wither on the Island shore.

But thou ! my little ocean flower—
My heart shall be thy ocean cave,
Secure from ruthless tempest's power,
My love shall be thy kindlier wave !

EXILED.

W. M. Whyte.

A STRANGER I, in a weary land
Where the men all strangers be,
And never my hand may hold a hand
That is warm with love to me.
And its oh, to be where in days of old
My father's race held sway,
Where the mists are rolled in waves of gold
On the peaks of the mountains gray,
And the mighty dead with martial tread
Swept down from the mountains gray.

In the land of the Celt, where my fathers dwelt
By the sounding Northern wave,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

There would I kneel where my kindred knelt,
And there would I find a grave !
But far away are the islands blue
That lie in the Western sea,
And the dear old home my fathers knew
Is home no more for me ;
And the songs they sung in the ancient tongue
Come only in dreams to me.

For me there waits no welcome there,
In the land of the setting sun ;
No spirit breathes a heart-warm prayer
For the peace of a homeless one.
Ah, cold North-wind ! as chill am I
In the breath of the frozen Now.
Swift cloud that movest across the sky,
Love speeds as fast as thou,
For a desert sear is the land's face here,
And sad, my soul, art thou.

Is there never a voice can sing the songs,
The old home songs again ?
No crumb for a hungry soul that longs
To share in the love of men ?
A stranger I, in a stranger land,
And a stranger I must be ;
But oh, that my hand might hold a hand
That is warm with love to me !
And oh, for the light of an eye that is bright
With the dawning of love for me !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

A HIGHLAND LAMENT.

Duchess of Sutherland.

It is the poor man's harvest; he turns him from the
sea

The old boat, the small boat, the boat that sails so
free.

There's yellow in the storm-cloud, there's yellow in
the moon,

But there's no yellow in the ear he must be reaping
soon.

It's green oats and black oats, and oats a-drip with
rain,

A-drip upon the marshland no man may fence or
drain.

It is the poor man's harvest: and rank the weeds and
grass;

He cuts and lays them lightly—the autumn winds will
pass.

The hard wind, the wet wind, the winds that pipe and
mourn;

And beat the boat upon the rock, yet dry no poor man's
corn.

There's white bread in the bakehouse, there's white
sand in the bay;

God's mercy on the poor man whose harvest rots
to-day.

Notes.—Local bakehouses in the far North and West are on the increase; the white loaf is rapidly replacing the oatmeal and barley scone of home baking in the consumption of the Highland people.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

NORTH UIST.

Duchess of Sutherland.

THE machair, the machair, the wild land of the sea,
The green land with the grey sand,
Where salt waves break, and outcast
Salt mists that creep in shoreward, as souls by Death
set free.

The wild geese, the wild swans, below the windy clouds,
The spindrift clouds a-blowing,
As first snow faintly veiling
The land and sea unwreathing, and wan as dead ones'
shrouds.

The strange calls, the strange cries, the men unheeding
pass,
The spinner with the white thread,
The fisher with the brown nets,
And she that herds the cattle through the shiver of the
grass.

The bent grass, the long grass, it silvers in the moon,
The moon athwart the sunset,
The light upon the darkness,
The light that wakes the music, where the Shith * are
rising soon.

The old Shith, the good Shith, the voice that comes
and goes,
That echoes wide of heaven,
No human lot a-wailing,
No human burden wailing, but what the wise man knows.

* Fairies. Pronounced "She-ee."

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

The machair, the machair, the beach land of the sea,
The fisher at his fishing,
The caillach at her weaving,
The wild birds keening westward, they steal the heart
from me.

HIGHLAND MUSIC.

George Eyre-Todd.

THE pipes, my lad! You hear them? far off among
the hills,
Strains wild and sad; too wild, perchance, for
southron ears like yours.
The Highland heart alone, mayhap, the Highland
music thrills;
Mayhap the step it quickens must have trod the
purple moors.

But I have seen in Saxon eye the light of gladness
shine,
And I have seen the courage mount anew to Saxon
brow
When the pipes proclaimed the triumph of the Alma's
thin red line,
And the pibroch of Sir Colin crossed the leaguer at
Lucknow.

The clarion's brazen blast of yore bade Romans fight
for Rome;
The bugles of Napoleon made the French lip proudly
smile :—

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

The strains of the far-streaming pipes fill Highland
 hearts with home,
And one wild pibroch bears me back to weep in
 Green Glengyle.

.

Well had he held his own, the grey old chief, his
 eighty years
 Bought by his own keen blade, and now, despite
 the outlaw's doom,
Stern lord yet of the Highland line, grim source of
 Lowland fears,
 His death was that of peaceful men in his own house
 and room.

His eyes had looked their last upon the blue Loch
 Voil below,
 No more his step would press the heath, no more
 his slogan ring,
Heuchan and sons around his bed felt their hearts
 sink to know
 By the drawn lip, the fading cheek, that death was
 hastening.

But hark ! a step, a voice beneath ! A foeman sought
 to see
 The dying chief. Lo ! life came back, eye kindled,
 pale cheek warmed :—
“Bring me my claymore, pistols, dirk. Throw my
 plaid over me !
 That never it be said a foe found Alpine's son un-
 armed.”

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

A haughty interview and brief, death waiting at the door.

The visitor dismissed, the old man smiled, his word was said,

“Now let the piper play *Cha til mé*” (I return no more).

The pipes went wailing down the loch. The bold Rob Roy was dead.

A KISS OF THE KING'S HAND.

Sarah Robertson Matheson.

It wasna from a golden throne,
Or a bower with milk-white roses blown,
But mid the kelp on northern sand
That I got a kiss of the king's hand.

I durstna raise my een to see
If he even cared to glance at me ;
His princely brow with care was crossed
For his true men slain and kingdom lost.

Think not his hand was soft and white,
Or his fingers a' with jewels dight,
Or round his wrists were ruffles grand
When I got a kiss of the king's hand.

But dearer far to my twa een
Was the ragged sleeve of red and green
O'er that young weary hand that fain,
With the guid broad-sword, had found its ain.

Farewell for ever, the distance gray
And the lapping ocean seemed to say—
For him a home in a foreign land,
And for me one kiss of the king's hand.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

THE FAR-OFF GLEN.

T. Ratcliffe Barnett.

O I FAIR would be a roaming
Where the heathbell grows,
And the honey scents are wafted,
And the clean wind blows :
I would lay me down a-dreaming
By the mountain streams,
And I'd watch the salmon leaping
With their silver gleams.

O it's I would climb the corries
At the break of day,
Where the hinds are feeding quietly,
And the great harts bray :
For I'm wearied with the bustle
And the tramp of men,
And my heart is full of longing
For the silent glen.

O to hear the grouse cock crowing,
And the whaup's wild cry,
Rising up the dark'ning hillside
To the gurly sky :
And at night when men are sleeping
And the birds are still,
It is then you hear the silence
Ringing down the hill.

Let me see the salt spray dashing
On the rock-bound shore,
Let me listen to the thunder
Of the breakers' roar :

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

While the sea-birds sweep and circle
In their wild wet home,
And their white wings flash and glisten
O'er the snow-flecked foam.

O I'm weary with the racket
Of this dinsome town,
And it's dreaming more than sleeping
When I lay me down :
For my heart will aye be turning
To the hills again,
And I fain would fly to-morrow
To the far-off glen !

LAMENT—I SEE THE DARK GREEN PINES OF THE HILL.

The Hon. S. Ruadri Erskine.

I SEE the dark green pines of the hill ;
The fair blue Islands of the Clouds ;
I see the white edge of the sea,
And the high bosom of the green wave ;
But I cannot find Raonaild in Breadalbane.

I see the white surf of the sky,
The rolling green waves of the hills ;
I see the bright skirts of the clouds,
And the soft golden spray of the sun ;
But I cannot find Raonaild in Breadalbane.

I see the rich white fleeces of the sea,
Spread out for the wind to walk upon ;
I see the sparkling jewels of the wood,
And the snow shining like armour in the sun ;
But I cannot find Raonaild in Breadalbane.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

I hear the ouzel piping at the ford,
The sweet music of water rushing over stones ;
I hear the glad mavis of spring-tide,
And the soft voices of winds among trees ;
But never more shall I hear Raonaid in Breadalbane.

CULLODEN MOOR.

(SEEN IN AUTUMN RAIN.)

Amice Macdonell.

(Author of "Historical Plays for Children.")

FULL of grief, the low winds sweep
O'er the sorrow-haunted ground ;
Dark the woods where night rains weep,
Dark the hills that watch around.

Tell me, can the joy of spring
Ever make this sadness flee,
Make the woods with music ring,
And the streamlet laugh for glee ?

When the summer moor is lit
With the pale fire of the broom,
And through green the shadows flit,
Still shall mirth give place to gloom ?

Sad shall it be, though sun be shed
Golden bright on field and flood ;
E'en the heather's crimson red
Holds the memory of blood.

Here that broken, weary band
Met the ruthless foe's array,
Where those moss-grown boulders stand,
On that dark and fatal day.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Like a phantom hope had fled,
Love to death was all in vain,
Vain, though heroes' blood was shed,
And though hearts were broke in twain.

Many a voice has cursed the name
Time has into darkness thrust,
Cruelty his only fame
In forgetfulness and dust.

Noble dead that sleep below,
We your valour ne'er forget ;
Soft the heroes' rest who know
Hearts like theirs are beating yet.

INISHAIL

(GREEN INISHAIL, WHERE THE GRAVES ARE, IN LOCH AWE).

Lauchlan Mac Lean Watt.

From "In Poets' Corner" (Hodder & Stoughton).

I WILL go and leave the streetways,
And the world's wild dinsome places,
With the hurrying, weary footways,
And the folks of frenzied faces ;
I will go through darkened spaces,
Morning glad or starlight pale,
Through the rivers and the passes,
Till I find, among the grasses,
Long, sweet sleep among the grasses
Of the graves of Inishail.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Ah, ye daunt me with your wonder,
And your toils about you lying ;
O ye cities, with your thunder,
And your children in you dying ;
And I weary, ever sighing,
For the whisper of the West,
Where the glow and glamour meeting,
And the waves on long shores beating,
Are but echoes of the beating
Of the life's blood in my breast !

I will platt a roof of rashes
For the low place of my sleeping,
Where the wistful water plashes,
Crooning, croodling, laughing, weeping,
And the winds from Cruachan sweeping
Join their gladness and their wail ;
Till the angel's glory blinds me,
And the long sleep comes and finds me,
In the tangled grasses find me,
By the graves of Inishail.

“THE LITTLE ONES UNBAPTIZED.”

Lauchlan Mac Lean Watt.

From “The Tryst” (Hodder & Stoughton).

O LIST to the moan of the wind along the street,—
How it sighs by the eaves,
And whirls the leaves
Like listeners, all surprised ;
Ah, no ! it is only the homeless feet
Of the little ones unbaptized.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

They whimper and wail by the darkened door of home,
 With sorrow blind,
 They cannot find
 A rest in all the world,
Like wind-blown birds of the driving foam
 Along the darkness hurled.

O list to the cry of the wind along the street !
 How the mothers wake,
 And fond hearts break,
 With longings agonised,
For they hear the beat of the homeless feet,
 Of their lost ones unbaptized.

Weeping like wearied pilgrims all the way,
 They drift by the door,
 And Love grows sore,
 To rise and open free,
And lo ! there is only the night-mist gray,
 And the sorrowing of the sea.

Ah, once I dreamed, in vision more than a dream,
 That pity sweet
 Drew me out to the street,
 For my heart was wrung with care,
And lo, in a dim, sad flickering gleam,
 I saw the children there.

But a Shadow, with bleeding brow, thorn-garlanded,
 With tenderest grace
 Of love in His face,
 Though scarred from suffering sore,
In silence led the souls of the dead,
 And angels walked before.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

SEMITONES.

Mary Adamson.

I.

Oh, moors so purple with heather blowing,
Scenting the northland breezes free :
To my exiled heart there's a long debt owing—
When will ye bloom for me ?

II.

Oh, bonnie braes with the gowans shining,
White and gold on the grassy lea,
For your star-like eyes I am often pining—
When will ye shine for me ?

III.

Oh, burnies singing amid the heather,
Your lay is a lilt of Used-to-be :
And my heart stands still when I ask ye whether
Ye will sing again for me.

IV.

Oh, grey old City,* whose magic story
To my childhood's fancy held the key,
With the mystic charm of your twilight glory
Whisper again to me ?

V.

Oh, whin so golden : my home-hills' treasure,
Lighting so warmly the Highland sod :
Both good and ill will Rand gold measure—
You're pure as the path to God.

* Edinburgh.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

LULLABY.

J. H. Mac Nair.

THE clouds are sailing up in the sky,
The sky is high and the sea is deep,
And in between the seagulls cry,
And so my little one—must sleep.

The sky is high and the sea is deep,
The little fishes swim in the sea,
And so my little one must sleep
Because—a sailor's—girl is she.

The little fishes swim in the sea,
And my little fish must learn to swim,
Because a sailor's girl is she,
She—must go out—and look—for him.

And my little fish must learn to swim
Past the caves where the mermaids are,
She must go out and look for him
Steering—straight—by the Polar star.

Past the caves where the mermaids are,
She must not stop to join their play,
Steering straight by the Polar star
She must bring—him back—by Christmas day.

She must not stop to join their play,
I shall be watching for my two,
She must bring him back by Christmas day
Sailing—straight—the dark seas—through.

I shall be watching for my two,
The clouds are sailing up in the sky,
Sailing straight the dark seas through,
And in—between—the seagulls cry.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

THE PHANTOM PIPER.

A BALLAD OF EDINBURGH CASTLE.

Dr. Riccardo Stephens.

O HAVE ye heard of Angus Blair,
Who lived long since in black Auchmair?
And have ye heard old pipers tell
His story—how he piped in Hell?
When Angus piped the old grew young,
Crutches across the floor were flung;
Nay more, 'twas said his witching breath
Had robbed the grave, and cheated death.

Above all else, a march of war
Was what men praised and feared him for;
When that he played, like fire it ran
In blood and brain of every man;
Then stiffened hair began to rise,
Bent brows scowled over starting eyes;
Then, at his will, men spilt their blood
Like water of a winter flood,
Swearing with Angus, ill or well,
They'd charge light-hearted into Hell.
Long years, through many a feast and fray,
Did Piper Angus pipe his way;
Till, swept upon the swirling tide
Of a night-charge, he sank and died.

That night the Piper rose to tread
The ways that lie before the dead.
He saw God's battlements afar
Blazing behind the utmost star,
And turning in the chill night air,
Thought he might find a shelter there.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

But as he turned to leave the earth,
With all its music, maids and mirth,
The battered pipes beneath his feet
Screamed out a wailing, last retreat ;
Then Piper Angus paused, and thought
Of the wild work those pipes had wrought ;
“ But there,” quoth he, “ in peace and rest,
Up there, the holy ones, the blest,
Praise aye the Lord, and aye they sing,
While golden harps and cymbals ring.
To my wild march or sad strathspey
The heavenly host would say me nay,
And none would hear my chanter more
Unless the Lord went out to war.
But often have I heard men tell
How they would follow pipes to Hell :
That way I'll try ; in Hell maybe
Some corner's kept for them and me.”

So said, so done—for well content
Down the dark way to Hell he went,
The Chanter felt his finger-tips,
The Blow-pipe thrilled between his lips,
The Drones across his shoulder flung,
Moaned till the Earth's foundations rung,
The streamers flaunted on the blast
As striding smoke and shadow past,
With bonnet cocked, and careless air,
Piping his march, went Piper Blair.

Down where the shackled earthquakes dwell
Are piled the reeking halls of Hell.
Their walls are steel, their gates are brass ;
Round them four flaming rivers pass ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

And sleepless sentinels are set
On every point and parapet,
To hedge the souls whose far-off cries
Up to the world may never rise.

That night, so still the whole place seemed,
You'd think all Hell had peace and dreamed,
For the dark Master, brooding aye
Over last hope and ancient fray,
Had, from his vantage, pale and grim,
Perchance to please a passing whim,
Hissed down a word which quelled and cowed
And silenced all that shuddering crowd.
So now aloft upon his throne
He sat indifferent, alone,
While poor damned souls who dared not cry
In writhing droves went whirling by.
These, dumb, before he noted aught,
Some strange and wandering sound now caught.

And first a little note they heard
Far off—and like a lonely bird ;
And then it grew, and grew, and grew,
As near and nearer still it drew,
Until Hell's lord in slow surprise
Turned on the gates his weary eyes.

Then they that bent beneath a load
Stood up, nor felt the fiery goad.
Then they that trod on forks of flame
Trapped to the wild notes as they came.
Then, look, old foes of long ago
Feel old revenge revive and glow.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Then, heedless of the flaming whip,
They roll in one another's grip
With shout and shriek and throttled jeer,
—And over all the pipes rang clear.

But from the march those pipes turned soon,
And sank, to sing another tune ;
A low lament, whose sobbing wail
Filled aching hearts and made them fail.
And they that fought a breath ago
Now wept at one another's woe.

A second change—a lilting air
Made Hell look bright, made Hell look fair,
And wretches gasping new from death
Followed the tune beneath their breath—
Then, piping yet, erect, alone,
The Piper stood before the throne.

Up rose the Master in his place,
Eyeing the Piper's careless face,
“ No room, no room in Hell can be
For Piper Angus Blair,” cried he ;
“ Would to such sounds my host had trod
Ere I was hurled down here by God ;
Mine hadst thou been, before I fell,
I'd rule in Heav'n now—not in Hell.
Then every night and every day
On Heaven's high ramparts shouldst thou play,
But here—here's neither war nor mirth,
Nor more in Heav'n ; so back to Earth.”

Thus now, as over glen and brae
The wild wind wanders on its way,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Dead Piper Angus Blair goes too,
And pipes and pipes the whole world through.
Unseen, unknown he goes. To-day
He'll pipe perchance for bairns at play
To set them dancing : maybe steal
To-night to watch a roaring reel.
There, when the panting pipers tire,
He joins, and sets all hearts afire ;
And ere the dawn his pipes have pealed
Fiercely across some stricken field.
But when each year is at its close
Right down the road to Hell he goes.
There the gaunt porters all a-grin
Fling back the gates to let him in,
Then damned and devil, one and all,
Make mirth and hold high carnival,
The while the Master sits apart
Plotting rebellion in his heart.
Till, when above the dawn is grey,
The Piper turns and tramps away.

LOCHFYNESIDE.

J. Donald.

A GLINT of molten sunshine,
A tranquil summer day ;
A hillside brown,
O'er a quaint old town,
With the herring boats in the bay ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

A whirl of white gulls flying
On aimless wings and free ;
 Tall firs asleep
 On the rocky steep
And the sweet salt breath of the sea ;

A peace within me growing
That stills the carp of care ;
 A short lived gleam
 Of an old dead dream,
With an old-time song in the air ;

'Tis here I would be dwelling,
And scorn the strokes of time,
 Contented well
 With the ocean's spell,
And the glamour of some sweet rhyme ;

And here I fain would linger
Upon the hillside brown ;
 In shine and shower,
 Each fleeting hour,
Till the sun of my life goes down.

THE LOST LOVER.

Henry Whyte ("Fionn").

O'ER the stormy sea
Weary winds are sighing,
Wailing fitfully
Where my love is lying,
 'Neath the stormy sea.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Murm'ring winds that sweep
O'er his lowly pillow,
Wake the music deep
Of the rolling billow—
Soothe his gentle sleep.

Waves with snowy crest,
In your wild commotion,
Bear me to his breast,
Where the depth of ocean
Lulls itself to rest.

'Gainst the rocky shore
Fleecy waves are breaking,
Heedless of their roar,
He his rest is taking
Till his sleep is o'er.

Seagulls mock my cry
When for thee I'm weeping ;
Tears bedim my eye—
Weary watch I'm keeping
Till with thee I lie.

Here alone I pine,
I am weak and weary,
When I life resign,
Lay me with my dearie
'Neath the ocean brine.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

A MEMORY OF SUTHERLAND.

Ian Reay.

AN inland sea of pines
Flames in the sunset, or in reddening morn
Stands forth majestic when in long-drawn lines
The phantom mists are torn.

Far-spreading purple hills
Lie narrowing westward till they meet at last ;
Betwixt them, fed by many thousand rills,
The swelling stream flows fast.

The hardy crofters' fields
Spread tartan on the slopes ; the conquering plough
Pushes its way, and, lo ! the heather yields
Brave hands and sweating brow !

Over the silent hills
Shin roars in flood ; and with a single leap
The eyes are there before the spirit wills :
Standing upon the steep

I see the salmon spring
From out the turmoil high into the air,
To be tossed downwards as a fragile thing,
Yet turn again and dare.

.

The moon sinks slowly down ;
I know my dream is over, that my eyes
Must, when they open, see the teeming town
On their vexed vision rise.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

SONG OF THE LITTLE FOAM-BELL.

John Cameron.

LIKE a wandering beam,
On the breast of the stream,
I have come from my home on the hills afar;
I have leapt o'er the steeps
Where the hurricane sweeps,
And sings the wild song of the stormy war.

I have passed through the gorge,
Where the boiling surge
Was leaping the bounds of its ancient sway—
Where the lone owl wails,
And the Naiad sails,
In her flowing robes 'neath the pale moon's ray.

Where the Naiads lave
Their necks in the wave,
And their breasts like floating snowballs seem,
I have whirled me round,
Like a fitful sound,
That rings in the ear in a pleasant dream.

A wandering sigh,
That was fluttering by,
Pursuing hope from a maiden's breast,
Alit on my bark,
Like the dove on the ark,
For it found on earth no place of rest.

A sunbeam torn
From the brow of morn,
Like a living star on my pathway driven,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Beaconed my flight,
When no other light
Beam'd from the starless arch of heaven.

I bore on my bosom
The leaf of a blossom,
That bloom'd in a bower where lovers sighed ;
But a roaming sprite
In its wayward flight,
Stole it, and sank in the silvery tide.

In the balmy spring,
The Fairy-King
Oft sent his Queen with me afloat :
When the glow-worm's beam,
And the lover's dream,
He wove for sails to his fairy boat.

On the waters I dwell,
A little foam-bell :
O ! who will with me to the silvery sea—
I will sing a sweet song,
As I wander along
To the limitless realm of eternity.

LAMENT FOR ROB ROY.

A. S. Mac Bride.

THE setting sun will rise to-morrow,
The earth will spring from Winter's sorrow,
The waning moon renewed is ever ;
But man from death returneth never.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

No more, no more, no more, no never
Returns unto us, the brave Mac Gregor :
Nor sword, nor gold, death's band can sever—
Mac Gregor is gone : he's gone for ever.

The breeze on the ben is mourning and moaning,
The trees in the glen are grieving and groaning :
Oh ! sad runs the stream, and rueful the river—
Mac Gregor is gone ; for ever, for ever.

Never more, by the shore, on the strath or the mountain,
Will his call sweetly fall on the ears of Clan Alpine ;
Nor again in the glen will his eagle-plumes quiver—
The Mac Gregor is gone—to return, ah ! never.

Thro' the heart of Ben Lomond the *cumha* is winging,
Thro' Glengyle the weird wail of the Banshee is ringing ;
In the clouds with his fathers he's dwelling forever—
The Mac Gregor is gone—to return, never, never.

A SONG OF THE HEBRIDES.

John Hogben.

O TIDES that are breaking
On many a shore !
O winds that are shaking
The briar at my door,
And flying and making
Your sport evermore—
Here—there—and away, leaving thistle-tops swinging,
Delicate chimes from the blue-bells ringing ;
While the tall grasses lean to each other and whisper,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

And each little faint-hearted common way flower,
Whose life had been sleep in the sun hour by hour,

Looks gratefully up in her own way to lisp her
Sweet thanks for your infinite favours !

O dappled light that wavers

On the heaving breast of the bay !

O headlands green,

Beyond the sheen,

With your wandering skirts of spray !

O solitary shores,

Where the riotous waterfall

Ever in prodigal ecstasy pours,

And the crooning curlews call !

O shining strips of sand

Where the busy waves are at play

Dancing a minuet, while the hills

In silent majesty stand !

O long, dim lines of the islands that are

Scarce seen but at ebb of day,

When ye stand in the liquid light that fills

The west, and a single star

Trembles in purple air !

O, *all* things good and fair—

I slight you not—ah : surely not—

Yet your charms but wait to be linked with life ;

A life that is greater than your own—

A life enriched by colours caught

From a sun you have never known ;

A strength that has grown

Not out of elemental strife—

Which knows you not, ye winds that wander by ;

Nor you, ye clouds that fleck the summer sky ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Nor you, ye lonely seas,
That ebb and flow, untaught, among the Hebrides.

One strength is of the hills and one of men !
Alone in thought or life, we cannot live—
Even at the very heart of Nature, when
We take her gifts we none the less must give
A deeper grace begotten elsewhere—
The influences human ;
The might supreme of man ;
The tender love of woman,
And all that truth and goodness can
Inspire to mingle memory with onward-looking prayer.

Whatever loveliness we see we long ourselves to show ;
And so, we ever thirst
At ocean's brim, for our affections go
Beyond our praise, and nursed
Is the dear yearning for companionship in joy ;
Although we lie beneath the hand of quietness,
Which lifts us past all fretting and annoy
As these green waters bear the brown weeds upwards,
—Yes !

We seek the eyes that love the world we love—
Yet not the wide, wide world alone, but us ;
For, sacredly, we feel ourselves above
The highest of earth's snowy summits ;—thus
We value life anew,
And in a little beating heart we see
More power to search and win us—mystery
To lift us heavenward—than in you,—
Earth's richest moods and rarest !—

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

And yet, even while the mind will onward run
Thus crowning human life, Thou, God, prearest
The heart to find—because it knows Thou carest
For earth and man—a wiser love of both ;
The soul to tremble at the Power that doth
Mingle and make them one !

THE MAID OF THE ISLES.

William Freeland.

SWEET is the voice of the western sea,
As it breaks and ripples and smiles,
But sweeter far is the voice to me
Of the maid of the soft green Isles—
The maid, the maid of the Isles.

Fair are the forests in western lands,
As they toss their branches so free ;
But fairer is she who dwells by the sands,
The maid of the Isles of the sea—
The maid, the maid of the sea.

Dear as the glens, the lakes and the bens,
But sweeter and dearer is she—
The lass in whose eye is the blue of the sky ;
My joy of the western sea—
My love and light of the sea.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

THE HEATHER.

Neil Munro, LL.D.

If I were king of France, that noble fine land,
And the gold was elbow deep within my chests,
And my castles lay in scores along the wine-land
With towers as high as where the eagle nests ;
If harpers sweet, and swordsmen stout and vaunting,
My history sang, my stainless honour wore,
Was not my fortune poor, with one thing wanting—
The heather at my door !

My galleys might be sailing every ocean,
Robbing the isles, and sacking hold and keep,
My chevaliers go prancing at my notion,
To bring me back of cattle, horse, and sheep ;
Fond arms be round my neck, the young heart's tether,
And true love-kisses all the night might fill,
But oh ! *mochree*, if I had not the heather,
Before me on the hill !

A hunter's fare is all I would be craving,
A shepherd's plaiding and a beggar's pay,
If I might earn them where the heather, waving,
Gave fragrance to the day.
The stars might see me, homeless one and weary,
Without a roof to fend me from the dew,
And still content, I'd find a bedding cheery,
Where'er the heather grew !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

JOHN O' LORN.

Neil Munro, LL.D.

My plaid is on my shoulder and my boat is on the shore,
And it's all bye wi' auld days and you ;
Here's a health and here's a heartbreak, for it's hame,
my dear, no more,
To the green glens, the fine glens we knew !

'Twas for the sake o' glory, but oh ! wae upon the wars,
That brought my father's son to sic a day ;
I'd rather be a craven wi' nor fame nor name nor scars,
Than turn an exile's heel on Moidart Bay.

And you, in the day-time, you'll be here, and in the
mirk,
Wi' the kind heart, the open hand and free ;
And far awa' in foreign France, in town or camp or kirk,
I'll be wondering if you keep a thought for me.

But never more the heather nor the bracken at my
knees,
I'm poor John o' Lorn, a broken man ;
For an auld Hielan' story I must sail the swinging seas,
A chief without a castle or a clan.

My plaid is on my shoulder and my boat is on the shore,
And it's all bye wi' auld days and you :
Here's a health and here's a heartbreak, for its hame,
my dear, no more,
To the green glens, the fine glens we knew !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

THE SPELL OF THE HEATHER.

E. N. Peden.

O I WISH I could see the heather again,
And the mountains veiled in the misty rain.
The desert lies still 'neath a burning sun,
Not a tree in sight, and shade there is none.
I am weary and home-sick, ready to faint,
When my lips pour forth the pityful plaint—
 “O I wish I could see the heather again,
 And the mountains veiled in the misty rain.”

Again I sit in the hush of the night,
'Neath the Eastern sky, where the Cross shines bright;
But my thoughts are away in the far past years,
And voices from home whisper soft in my ears.
Like a magnet they draw me, I must obey,
The spell is upon me, I cannot stay—
 “O let me see the heather again,
 And the mountains veiled in the misty rain.”

So I'm going, I'm going across the sea,
Back to my home and my ain countrie;
Back to the glens and the straths and the hills,
With the fresh green grass, and the sparkling rills;
Away from the heat and the desert's glare,
Back to the pure sweet moorland air,
 “Back where I'll see the heather again,
 And the mountains veiled in the misty rain.”

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

CELTIC MELANCHOLY.

John M. Hay, M.A.

I.

IT is not in the sorrow of the deep,
For sunset's magic turns to pearls her tears ;
Nor in old forests stiff with frost that sleep
Bowed with the legend of her ghostly years ;
Nor in the sombre grandeur of the hills,
Whose snows have cold communion with the skies ;
Not in the mourning of the moor with rain,
Or solemn mist that spills
Its weariness of silence ; or the cries
Of great winds wandering through the glens in pain.

II.

Thou hadst no knowledge of the market-place
And cities white and glad with statuary ;
The hiving ports of a far-travelled race,
Idols in gold and jewelled sacristy ;
Men hot with story from the ends o' earth,
Plaudits in theatres ; an eager fleet
Taking the tide, bound for the goodly wars.
Such stuff of song and mirth
Was never thine amidst the sleet
And noise of black whales spouting to the stars.

III.

Thine is the heritage of wandering men
Whose deeds are fragments passing like the stream ;
They build the tower ; they forge the shield ; and then
Their labours vanish like a fragrant dream.
Wistful and dim with sad magnificence

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Ye are the men destined to doom and death.
A purpose ye could never realise ;
 And stable recompense
Of victory was fleeting as a breath.
Only the face of death is kind and wise.

IV.

Ye are the men of perished hopes, of things
Most dear that now are ever lost—home, name,
And country—song of triumph never brings
Like requiem the meaning that's in fame.
Slogan ne'er stirred the heart to dare and die
As coronach loud wailing in the glen.
Ah ! aye for you the best's beneath the sod ;
 Over the sea to Skye ;
All's over ; falls the night on broken men,
Culloden's sword with blood writes Ichabod.

TO A DEAD WIFE.

John M. Hay, M.A.

THE faëry folk have lured your face away
Unto the land where one grows never old,
Beyond the hollow hills and doors of day.
 The snow is cold
And white upon the hill; the sea is crying like a child,
 The thatch is moving in the wind,
 And elfin harps are mourning on the wild.

 Come yet again.
The sea-gull's cry is all the voice of pain ;
My heart feels for your memory kind,
And sweetness thou hast left behind.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

The sad grey dead
About thy bed
Shall never murmur or complain.
When twilight comes, unbar the door,
Steal out across the drifted floor,
And homeward turn thy face, ah ! heart's desire.
Weary, weary is the moor,
Waste and dreary is the shore,
Oh ! come to warm your hands by the old fire.
Ah ! haste to bless again the cot, the hearth, the byre.

HER LAST REPLY.

(A DUET IN COMMEMORATION OF AN INCIDENT IN THE LIFE
OF A LOVER OF GAELIC SONG.)

George Henderson, Ph.D., B.Litt., M.A.

He—

In the rosy light of morning
O unhappy, happy me—
I will sing of true devotion
And the fates that parted be :
Once as mine thou wert, my sweet one,
Mine again ! I come to meet thee.

O'er the bosom of the ocean
Shall the sea-bird cease to roam,
Ere the depths of my emotion
Cease to seek thee for mine own :
Call me onwards, call and cheer me
In my wilderness, O hear me !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

She—

Love no more I cannot bring thee,
I have pledged my troth for aye ;
Time and tide alone can wing thee
Love upon thy lonesome way :
Cease, O ask me not to sever !
I am where I am for ever.

He—

Drear-hearted as December,
Unhappy, unhappy me ;
Vain thoughts, too well remembered,
And tears commingled be :
Woe, O woe ! a word not spoken
Was too late of love the token.

She—

Go ! forget me, why should sorrow
On that brow a shadow fling ?
Go ! forget me, and to-morrow
Brightly smile and sweetly sing :
Smile though I may not be near thee,
Sing though I no more may hear thee.

COME WITH ME.

Pittendrigh Macgillivray.

O COME with me where the sea birds fly,
Remote and far by the Isle of Skye—
Away with the winds a-sailing !
To laugh where the waves are playing !—
Will ye come with me ?

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

O see my boat with the brown sail dance,
Where shafts of the sun on the green waves glance—
The rush, the rise, and the falling—
The way of the sea a-calling—
Will ye come with me?

We'll go where the days are blue and white,
Where the stars are gold in the purple night,
By many an island faring—
The ways of a love all daring—
If ye come with me.

TEARS, TEARS.

(DEOIR, DEOIR, O DHEORA SHEARBH.)

Pittendrigh Macgillivray.

I.

TEARS, tears! O bitter tears!
Sorrow welling in my heart.
Long, lone, forsaken years
I delay that should depart.
Dark the hours that know no dreaming—
Darker far the eyes once gleaming—
Shadows now where day was beaming—
Come, O night, I wait for thee!

II.

Ochoin, ochoin, O chridh!
Golden day in splendour bright—
Green wood and fairy lea—
O the love that made the light!

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Now no more the ways of pleasure—
Death has broken fortune's measure—
Dark the dream my heart did treasure :
Come, O night, my shelter be !

LEWIS.

R. W. Mac Goun.

THE dauntless spirit of the North is thine,
Warring forever with a world of sea,
When Winter sets the ruthless tempest free,
Stinging and quickening the blood like wine.
Dream shapes begotten of the hardy brine :
Beckon through misty realms of fantasie
To where the shades of godlike heroes be—
Odin and Thor and all their mighty line.

But let the witchery of Summer throw
Her spell translucent over sea and air ;
When moor and hill with royal purple glow,
When stream and loch their smiles of beauty wear ;
Linked with the debt of happy years I owe,
Shall I not deem thee magically fair ?

THAT I WERE THERE !

Mac Kenzie Mac Bride.

ROOFLESS the walls, and all around is dreary,
Cold the ingle-side and bare,
Men called it home, 'tis now the wild bird's eyrie,
Yet I would that I were there !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Just to feel the wild wet breezes swirling
O'er the water and the whin,
To see the peat-reek o'er the cottage curling
And the hairst folk winning in.

To see the glens in Autumn's colours tender,
And the black Ben's misty wreath,
The birk and the breckan's dying splendour,
And the roaring linn beneath.

To see the foam from the white beach flying
And the boats leap through the waves,
And the ring of golden sea-tang lying
Stray'd from Atlantic's caves.

To hear again the beech-nuts falling, falling,
When the plantin's winning bare,
To hear again the pairicks calling, calling,
Oh would that I were there!

TIR MO CHRIDHE.

(To the Members of the London Argyllshire Association.)

Mac Kenzie Mac Bride.

WHAT makes our land so passing fair
That her remembrance wells and fills
The hearts of those who spring from her
And know the secrets of her hills?
'Tis not her wealth in weight of gold,
'Tis not her place in song and story,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Her broadsword's fame in days of old,
That makes her greatest, truest glory.

Nay, nor her place in change and mart,
Or wealth her merchant son attains ;
No pride in these could thrill my heart,
Or send this fire through all my veins ;
For what avails great store of wealth,
Or influence and place or power,
If joy and happiness and health
Are not encompassed in its dower !

Not ev'n the sad, neglected stones
In silent graveyards by the sea,
Where rest my kinsmen's sacred bones,
Could make such swift appeal to me ;
For no neglect can wound them now,
No critic make them less than royal,
Who wear for aye the faith-crowned brow—
He being king who most is loyal.

No, 'tis her snow-clad hills, her lakes,
They are the great, the precious gifts
Whose voice our swift allegiance wakes,
And all our sordid soul uplifts ;
And this the privilege we prize
That binds us each a friend, a brother—
To gaze into the wondrous eyes
And kiss the lips of such a mother !

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

THE WAKING YEAR.

David Gow.

THE land is a-flush with Spring,
The tide runs high in the bay,
The winds have a clarion ring,
And the billows a shining ray.

Merrily rocks the boat,
The Bell-buoy tosses and twirls,
And the bubbles that shoreward float
Are as full of colour as pearls.

All the hues of the prism they show—
The glitter of crimson dyes,
The orange of sunset glow,
And the purple of morning skies.

The sands are a silver sheet,
And the waves a revel of light,
Where motion and music meet,
And colour and form unite.

From the black cliff's perilous steeps,
The grass in the gale swings free ;
The sea in the sunlight leaps,
And the great clouds dip to the sea.

Far distant from cape to cape,
Hangs the smoke of a steamer's trail,
Like the genie's vaporous shape
In the old Arabian tale.

And ev'n as the waves that swing
And swirl on the shining sand,
The billowy life of the Spring
Rolls over the sunlit land.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

ARRAN.

Ferdinand E. Kappey.

HERE, as of old, the dreaming hours fulfil
Their ancient pledge, and flower in sunlit days
Above thy pastoral slopes and wave-washed bays,
Where melody and colour merge and thrill.
Thy chosen Priestess, Beauty, beckons still
From whin-clad straths and heather-haunted ways,
Or lies in wait along the scented braes,
Or chains a leafy thought from hill to hill.

Bruce found a shelter, lovely Isle, in thee
When o'er his head the cloud of menace rolled,
He saw thy rock-strewn mountains tipped with gold
When morn rose sovran from the murmuring sea,
And on thy bosom, fold on misty fold,
Beheld her dew-stained garments floating free.

TO A BROTHER-CELT IN INDIA.

Wm. Chisholm Mitchell, M.A.

THE exiled children of the silent Highlands—
You breathe the sun-parched air far over-seas,
We tread the stony streets of Southron nighlands—
Life's varied portions these.

Yet to our native strath, yon moorland shieling,
The mist-clad Ben, the glen, the peat-smoke blue,
To loyalties the ties of blood revealing,
Our Highland hearts beat true.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

“SHON CAMPBELL.”

W. A. Mac Kenzie.

SHON CAMPBELL went to College,
Because he wanted to ;
He left the croft in Gairloch
To dive in Bain and Drew :
Shon Campbell died at College
When the spring skies were blue.

Shon Campbell went to College,
The pulpit was his aim :
By day and night he “ground,” for he
Was Hielan’, dour, and game ;
The session was a hard one,
Shon flickered like a flame.

Shon Campbell went to College,
And gave the ghost up there,
Attempting six men’s “cramming,”
On poor and scanty fare ;
Three days the Tertians mourned him,
’Twas all that they could spare.

Shon Campbell sleeps in Gairloch,
Unhooded and ungowned,
The green quadrangle of the hills
Watching his sleep profound,
And the “gaudeamus” of the burns
Making a homely sound.

But when the last great Roll is called,
And “adsums” thunder loud,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

And when the quad is cumbered
With an eager, jostling crowd,
The Principal Who rules us all
Will say, "Shon Campbell, come,
Your Alma Mater hails you
Magister Artium."

TIREE.

(TOLD TO THE CHILDREN.)

K. W. Grant.

COME, Willie, and Mary, and Elsie,
Come hither, my darlings three—
Willie can lean on my shoulder,
Elsie shall sit on my knee,
With Mary in front on the hassock,
Her brown eyes fastened on me—
While I tell of the sights that charmed me
Far away in the Isle of Tiree.

.

The sky, like a glorious blue bell,
Endomes the flashing surge,
On the far-off rim of the ocean
Resting its dim, grey verge;
But, O, you should see it at midnight,
When the stars are flashing through,
Not only above, but around you,
All over the dome of blue.

.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

In the shelter of bold Ken-a-varra
The cormorant loves to rest ;
While high on the rocks above it
The seagull builds her nest,
And look at the dear little sandpipers
Running in rows on the shore,
Pattering after the billows,
And rushing as fast in before,
Just like a bevy of children
Clad in their pinafores white ;
Where do they stay, now, I wonder,
All through the weary night ?

.
Look at the herds of cattle
Dotting the downs everywhere,
Yellow, and black, and brindled,
Coated with shaggy hair ;
Look at the frolicsome horses,
Galloping over the sward,
And the flocks of geese a-roaming
Around each trim farm yard.
There are pigs and ducks at the door-ways,
The hen with her chickens too ;
All squealing and quacking *in English* !
And making a great ado ;
But the people chatting in Gaelic,
Say—"Cia mar a tha sibh an diu ?"

.
The sweet, wild cry of the curlew,
And the lapwing is everywhere ;
And hark, how the lark is trilling
Its autumn song in the air.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

There, at your feet, the Atlantic
Is rolling in splendour and might,
And behind it, every evening,
The suns drops out of sight.

.

See, on the breast of the ocean
Skerry and island gleam,
Tinged with the crimson of sunset,
Lovely and strange as a dream ;
Wave them a loving adieu, dears,
Ere we descend from the height,
Whisper—"God bless the islands,
And give them a restful Goodnight."

THE HEBRIDEAN NURSE.

Margaret Maclean.

I.

As my old nurse rocked me upon her knee
She furtively wiped away a tear,
Which she foolishly fancied I did not see ;
Then held me closer as if in fear
Lest I, whom she called her "little dear,"
Would be spirited away from her, and she
Left lonely by the Atlantic Sea.

II.

"When they speak, the winds in the night," she said,
"They speak who are far away and dead.
Some of their voices we dimly hear
Like far-off rivers, throughout the night—
One voice to the door of my heart draws near :

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Sweet little mouth, blow out the light,
And here in the dark keep listening
With me while your little arms cling—
Oh! the magic of life on the hills of Skye,
Ere comes the shadow of Life's Goodbye!"

III.

"It is the voice of a lad was drowned
One night the furies broke loose from hell,
Long years ago in the Barra Sound—
And since that night there is some deep spell
On the mind of man in that troubled place,
Where the moon is wan on a wave-washed face."

DAWN.

Margaret Maclean.

AWAKE! awake! the sunlight floods the world;
My buoyancy is as a song: I shake
My langours from me, and, light-footed, crave
To mount the hills. Oh! little one, awake!
This wonder-world will lose its mighty thrills
If I roam lonely o'er its rosy hills.

You promised me to share my vagaries—
The glory of the morning on the moors,
The pallor of the twilight in the woods,
The shiver of the midnight, and the lures
Of lochs sun-ridden and of glades dew-pearled,
And hear the ocean booming through the world.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

From the enticing of the universe

My keen eyes turn their searching on your face ;
Why sleep so soundly when I bid you wake,
With the impatience of my ardent race ?
Or has your spirit roamed so far away
To meet the dawn of an eternal day ?

.
Have you allowed another spell than mine

To charm your spirit—I, who watch your face
With eyes whose sternness can outstrip their love ?
Mine is the goad of Torquil's vengeful race,
Betrayed or Beloved, your destiny
Waits till your eyes awake and answer me !

INNISMORE (ARRAN).

Charles Bannatyne, M.B.C.M.

Do you remember, *m'eudail*,* when we left the glen
together,
The sore day, the hard day that never more will
come !
The sky was bright, the laverock sang clear above the
heather,
But song and sky were dark to us, and, och ! our
hearts were dumb.
I wot, that on the shieling walls the old roof still is
resting,
The warm roof, the kind roof, that hid our youthful
days.

* *M'eudail*, pronounced maydal, means my darling.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

I wonder if the brown birds among the thatch are
nesting,
Or, through the western window yet, the sun, departing,
plays?

Do you remember, *m'eudail*, we could hear the sad bird
sobbing

Its weird song, its wild song, far out upon the moor !
Och ! how our hearts, in unison with every note, were
throbbing ;

And grief, our eyes was blinding as we left the
shieling door.

I often wonder, *m'eudail*, if the glen is grand as ever,
The green glen, the fine glen, where sings the sea's
refrain ;

Or if the lowly bracken still is nodding by the river
Whose waters, like the tide of life, ebb, ebb, nor
turn again.

Do you remember, *m'eudail*, in God's vineyard near the
passes,

The sweet plot, the sad plot, where earthly ties are
riven,

We laid our darling *nighean og** among the piping
grasses ;

The west wind carols over her in mellow notes of
heaven !

When I muse sometimes, *m'eudail*, in our old home in
the mountains,

The dear home, the clan home—it's home, home,
still the same,

* *Nighean og*, pronounced ne-een aug, means young daughter.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Though, mayhap, no more we'll taste its joys, or see
its sparkling fountains—

There steals a feeling o'er me that I somehow cannot
name.

Do you remember, *m'eudail*, when we crossed the track-
less water,

The old sea, the stern sea, that links this land and
home !

Fate forced us on the journey, and poverty's fell
slaughter,

To find beyond the Atlantic surge, the luck we
prayed would come.

I often wonder, *m'eudail*, as I dream through evening
shadows,

Of the glen days, the sweet days, the hard days full
of care,

If we could happy live again among the hills and
meadows ?

Then a longing rushes o'er me, and I would that I
were there !

Our days are autumn, *m'eudail*, and the reaper is
awaiting

The ripe grain, the gold grain, fast searing in the
sheaves,

But we cannot forget, *m'eudail*, our springtide time of
mating ;

The browning tint of autumn spares some green in
the leaves !

Our hearts are Highland, *m'eudail*, and the hope that
often haunts us,

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

The fond hope, the Gael's hope, it soothes us o'er
and o'er ;
Our days are autumn, *m'eudail* ; but sea nor time e'er
daunts us,
As we sweetly dream our wearied bones will rest in
Innismore.

ISLE OF MY HEART.

Donald A. Mac Kenzie.

I'm longing here my loneself
In a foreign land and fair,
Where the sun is ever gleaming,
And I can live at ease ;
For it's me that will be dreaming
Of the dear days that were,
On that jewel of an island
In the sweet Hebrides.

The little island of my heart
O, cold it is and bare—
It's bleak wi' rain and black wi' peat
And hungry in the foam ;
But Oh ! it's heartsome and it's sweet—
It's me that would be there,
For they're good folk, they're warm folk,
They're fine folk at home.

I'm wondering if my mother
Will be sitting by her door,
With her spinning-wheel at even,
That's humming like a bee. . . .

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

She'll be bent and grey with grieving
O'er the dear days of yore,
And her old heart will be hungry
For her sons across the sea.

My father will be growing frail
With delving in the croft,
While a peat smell, a sweet smell
Is broken from the land. . . .
A blackbird pipes above the well,
And eve is falling soft. . . .
He'll be old and worn with working
Like the spade that's in his hand.

It's a poor land, a dour land,
A hard land and cold ;
The young grow weary of its yoke,
And east and west they roam ;
There's little left for poor folk
When they'll be growing old. . . .
But they're near to me and dear to me,
My own folk at home.

THE BANSHEE.

Donald A. Mac Kenzie.

KNEE-DEEP she waded in the pool—
The Banshee robed in green—
She sang yon song* the whole night long,
And washed the linen clean ;

* The *Banshee* is popularly represented as singing a song while she washes the "dead clothes" of one about to meet a swift and tragic fate.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

The linen that would wrap the dead
She beetled on a stone,
She stood with dripping hands, blood-red
Low singing all alone—

*His linen robes are pure and white,
For Fergus More must die to-night !*

'Twas Fergus More rode o'er the hill,
Come back from foreign wars,
His horse's feet were clattering sweet
Below the pitiless stars ;
And in his heart he would repeat—
" O never again I'll roam ;
All weary is the going forth,
But sweet the coming home ! "

*His linen robes are pure and white,
For Fergus More must die to-night !*

He saw the blaze upon his hearth
Come gleaming down the glen ;
For he was fain for home again,
And rode before his men—
" 'Tis many a weary day," he'd sigh,
" Since I would leave her side ;
I'll never more leave Scotland's shore
And you, my dark-eyed bride."

*His linen robes are pure and white,
For Fergus More must die to-night !*

So dreaming of her tender love,
Soft tears his eyes would blind—
When up there crept and swiftly leapt
A man who stabbed behind—

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

“’Tis you,” he cried, “who stole my bride,
This night shall be your last!” . . .
When Fergus fell, the warm, red tide
Of life came ebbing fast. . . .

*His linen robes are pure and white,
For Fergus More must die to-night !*

THE WEE FOLK.

Donald A. Mac Kenzie.

In the knoll that is the greenest,
And the grey cliff-side,
And on the lonely ben-top
The wee folk bide ;
They’ll flit among the heather,
And trip upon the brae—
The wee folk, the green folk, the red folk and grey.

As o’er the moor at midnight
The wee folk pass,
They whisper ’mong the rushes
And o’er the green grass ;
All through the marshy places
They glint and pass away—
The light folk, the lone folk, the folk that will not stay.

O many a fairy milkmaid
With the one eye blind,
Is ’mid the lonely mountains
By the red deer hind ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Not one will wait to greet me,
For they have naught to say—
The hill folk, the still folk, the folk that flit away.

When the golden moon is glinting
In the deep, dim wood,
There's a fairy piper playing
To the elfin brood ;
They dance and shout and turn about,
And laugh and swing and sway—
The droll folk, the knoll folk, the folk that dance away.

O we that bless the wee folk
Have naught to fear,
And ne'er an elfin arrow
Will come us near ;
For they'll give skill in music,
And every wish obey—
The wise folk, the peace folk, the folk that work and
play.

They'll hasten here at harvest,
They will shear and bind ;
They'll come with elfin music
On a western wind ;
All night they'll sit among the sheaves,
Or herd the kine that stray—
The quick folk, the fine folk, the folk that ask no pay.

Betimes they will be spinning
The while we sleep,
They'll clamber down the chimney,
Or through keyholes creep ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

And when they come to borrow meal
We'll ne'er them send away—
The good folk, the honest folk, the folk that work
alway.

O never wrong the wee folk—
The red folk and green,
Nor name them on the Fridays,
Or at Hallowe'en ;
The helpless and unwary then
And bairns they lure away—
The fierce folk, the angry folk, the folk that steal and
slay.

MIDNIGHT AT FORRES.

Murdoch Mac Lean.

Macbeth : So foul and fair a night I have not seen.

Banquo : How far is't called to Forres?—

—*Macbeth*.

GLOOM, and silence, and spell,
Spell, and silence, and gloom,
And the weird death-light burns dim in the night,
And the dead men rise from the tomb.
And the dead men rise from the tomb
With taper and funeral shroud,
And in light array take their noiseless way
Under the midnight cloud.

From the ruined castle wall
That nods to the darkened moon,
'Tis an old time song comes faintly along
Like the sough of a fairy's croon.

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

And a spectre warder stands
With brand at the fallen gate,
For within the halls of the ancient walls
King Duncan holds his state.

See, by the Findhorn's stream,
In the pride of their long descent,
The knights of old meet in combat bold
At the gallant tournament.
And with struggling, fitful beam,
As they parry each thrust and deal,
The moon beams pale on a Cumin's mail
And a Moray's fearless steel.

Lo! from the ivied pile
That by Blervie watches grey,
The brave and fair, at the morris pair,
To the tune of a roundelay.
And first on the festal green,
As erst with the sword and lance,
In the fame that clings to his race of kings
'Tis Randolph leads the dance.

From the Abbey of Fair Kinloss,
In a cadence wild and free,
Which the sorrows haunt, comes the friar's chant,
With the moan of the restless sea.
And the Abbot paces slow,
With book, and taper, and bell,
"And the glory be to the Holy Three,
And, Mary, shield us well."

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

But hark ! from the high clock tow'r,
With a loud intruding jar,
The warning chime of departing time
Is borne on the night afar :
And gone are the pageant hosts,
And vanished the phantom crowd,
And the old town sleeps by its ancient keeps
Under the midnight cloud.

THE HIGH HILLS, THE LOW HILLS.

Joseph Lee.

THE high hills, the low hills,
The quiet hills o' hame ;
It's, O, that I were lying there,
Where curlews wild are crying there,
Far ower the saut sea faem.

The high hills, the low hills,
Wi' yellow broom aglow ;
It's, O, that I were roaming there,
Wi' her, where darkly foaming there,
The rushing torrents go.

The high hills, the low hills,
The hills we trod together ;
The silver sage-brush groweth here—
But pale to him who knoweth, dear,
The sight o' purple heather.

O, high hills, O, low hills,
Ye have my heart in hold ;

BOOK OF HIGHLAND VERSE.

Where lonely I am dwelling here,
The plains are widely swelling here—
Give me thy ramparts old.

O, high hills, O, low hills,
O, fair hills ower the faem ;
Where lightly winds are sighing there,
Where high the clouds are flying there,
Where curlews wild are crying there,
It's O, that I were lying there—
For then were I at hame.



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